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A BALLROOM REPENTANCE

A
BALLROOM REPENTANCE

BY
ANNIE EDWARDES
AUTHOR OF "ARCHIE LOVELL," "OUGHT WE TO VISIT HER?"
ETC.

IN TWO VOLS.

VOL. I.



LONDON
RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON ST.
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen
1882

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251. i. 986.

Printed by R. & R. CLARK, Edinburgh.

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A BALLROOM REPENTANCE.

CHAPTER 1.

THE DOLL TRIBE, GENERALLY.

“A PAIR of portmanteaus and a shabby violin case.”

Lake Leman sleeps five hundred feet below; a plain of sapphire, lit up by gleams of emerald, by fitful opal shafts, that melt, Jura-ward, into the crystalline air depths of sunset. In the middle distance a solitary lateen sail cleaves the blue. The opposite Savoy mountains, though August does but wane, are powdered with fresh-fallen snow. The swallows, already thinking of Africa, are trying their wings in figures-of-eight over-

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head. Oleanders, magnolias, and standard roses make sweet the garden of a certain Grand Hôtel Scherer that towers among chestnut avenues and sweeps of vineyard, high above Clarens. And the voice of Mrs. Scipio Leonidas P. Briggs breaks the stillness.

A pleasant voice, despite its sing-song drawl, a voice suggestive of hammock-swinging, negro fly-flappers, starlit flirtations, and every insidious mixture of ice and alcohol that it has entered into the heart of South American man to concoct.

"My word, yes! That was about the figure of Mrs. and Miss Dormer's luggage. A pair of portmanteaus and a shabby violin case. My maid watched them as they rode round from the cars. I surmise their dresses are innocent of Worth or la Ferrière. I surmise their dresses just came out of some London dry goods store. I spent a week in London, last spring," goes on Mrs. Scipio Leonidas

mournfully, "and the fog so affected my dyspepsia I never got round to see the Parks but once. That once was enough. My dear, there wasn't a well toiletted woman there, except, of course, some of our people from home and a few Parisians. A gentleman friend of mine from New York State remarked to me, 'The Aboriginal ladies we see around us do not dress. They clothe themselves. And as for their beauty—I just guess,' he observed, 'they look strong. Solidly built up of beef and beer. Calculated to ride fox-chasing, and to resist the vicissitudes of wind and rain. Climate,' my friend added, 'is not a word for this longitude. You get a deal of mixed weather, mostly bad, in England. Climate there is none.'"

Mrs. Colonel Scipio Leonidas P. Briggs—I love to register the lady's full title, although she, herself, will not unfrequently drop the final monosyllable — is a native of South

Carolina, and despite her fragile looks is interviewing Europe with a will and thoroughness that might put the whole strong-minded sisterhood of Britain to the blush.

The Colonel — so Mrs. Scipio Leonidas confesses when she has occasion to speak of her absent lord—is having a beautiful time over the other side. O my, yes! a lovely time. He is quite an unselfish man this accommodating Colonel; a pattern husband. They both hold emancipated ideas of the domesticities, Mrs. Scipio will tell you, within five minutes of your introduction to her. The Colonel don't want her to cross back till she has swallowed all the different waters of the Continent. It's the state of her gastric organs that's her trouble, and none of the physicians in Europe can fix her up. Homburg, Carlsbad, Vichy, she has tried them all. Her life has been spent going round the mineral baths two years and more, and she is right

down fagged and finished in consequence. My dear, yes! just look at her. And Mrs. Leonidas will languidly extend a taper, diamonded slip of a hand for your inspection. What is she? Don't deceive her. She is a sal-low, dyspeptic bundle of nerves, now, isn't she?

She is a fine-featured colourless invalid, of two or three and thirty, with large, restless, over-brilliant eyes, the foot (inadvertently, she shows it often) of a child, and the grace . . . of a South American. What simile could be found to express as much? An invalid, more than half imaginary, precariously existing on a regimen of French novels, rich dishes, and mineral waters. A creature of the great Doll tribe, unquestionably; dressed, jewelled, satin-slippered, here among Swiss mountains, as she was last spring in Paris, or will be next winter at Naples or Florence; and still, a doll with a brain. In England we have dolls enow. Wax dolls, wooden

dolls, porcelain dolls, dolls that open and shut their eyes, that speak, sing, dance; some, even, that kneel. The doll with a brain is of foreign manufacture, chiefly American or French. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas has mixed in the vividdest circles of Boston and New York, is brimful of advanced social theories, somewhat crude and garish, it may be, if you sift them finely; knows Italy like a guide-book, and is as well versed in recent Paris gossip of Church, senate, salon and greenroom, as a genuine Parisian.

Dinner is her weakness, dress her passion. She is of an organisation so sensitive that the neighbourhood of a cat, the odour of certain flowers, will cause her to faint. And she has been known to travel from Biarritz to Madrid in the dogdays in order to be present at a bullfight.

“Yes, a pair of portmanteaus and a shabby violin case.” So the lady resumes, for the benefit of such loungers as are drinking after-

dinner coffee in the hotel garden. "And Mrs. Dormer, one of your aristocrats, no doubt, a duke's daughter, or baronet's widow, or earl's second cousin, does not condescend to show in the public parlours." It is a boast of Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs that she cares not enough for lineage to distinguish one English title from the other. Yet, I suspect, if she should cross his path, the society of a living duke, or baronet, or even of an earl's second cousin, would not be distasteful to her. "Surely you can furnish us with chapter and verse out of the Peerage, Mrs. Skelton. *Who* are the owners of the portmanteaus and violin case that they should give themselves airs when they travel round these lakes?"

"Dormer . . . Dormer," repeats the personage addressed as Mrs. Skelton. "Dian, my love, have we not heard that name before? yes,—I recollect!" And the speaker draws a wisp of red shawl virtuously around her thin,

angular shoulders. "It will be found, no doubt, that this misguided young Farintyre, whom everybody pities, is in attendance on them. Miss Joyce Dormer's latest victim."

"And future husband?" asks Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, with awakening interest.

"Ah, that is a very different matter. I knew the Dormers last winter, in Nice—by sight, only. In my position, my dear Mrs. Scipio, no gentleman of the party, it is an actual duty to weed one's travelling acquaintance, to keep clear if possible of scandal. My girls, you see, are so unsophisticated! Pansy and Dian, until we came abroad, never mixed in any but the best circles of Cathedral society, and our giddy little Aurora, of course, was still in the schoolroom."

A young English lad, tall, bronzed, Oxford-suited, stands, enjoying his after-dinner cigarette, and the view of lake and mountain, at some paces distant from these ladies. At the

touching reference to our little Aurora's giddiness, a smile, somewhat doubtful in its import, hovers around the corners of his lips.

"Miss Aurora Skelton is not exactly what in our American circles we should call a Bud. I should judge Miss Aurora to be near upon my own time of life?"

The tone of Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs is friendly. She smiles like one who makes an amiable, but somewhat rose-coloured conception to human weakness. Yet does her voice imply a query.

Aurora's mamma, too wary a veteran to be provoked to battle on so dangerous a field as age, changes the subject deftly.

She is a sharp, chirruping, altogether terrible, little old woman, this Mrs Skelton; an old woman, dressed in the extreme of youthful mode, yet, withal, so patched, so powdered, so wizened, so shrivelled, she looks as though she must fall to pieces at a touch. For a short

half-hour you might judge her, by reason of her frivolity, to be harmless. Mention her in any of the Riviera pensions that are her winter haunts, if you would know the depth of emotion her name is capable of inspiring in the breast of unwedded and unguarded man! Persistent and metallic is Mrs. Skelton's voice; mirthless her jerky laughter. In lieu of honest gray hairs, a small pink cap is perched on the summit of her head. Her hollow cheeks are rouged; her smile is fixed upon the very newest principles and warranted; a smile glistening, adamant, as the longest established firm in Hanover Square can supply. She is a very libel on old age; a sermon—not in stones, but paste, and whose text is the rottenness and vanity of all human desire! Around her, in sallow greens, brickdust crimsons, and dull golds, are grouped a trio of elderly girls, each in an attitude, her daughters.

“My children are not handsome, according

to rule," the Veteran will allow, ingenuously. "As regards feature, indeed, they take after the Prebendary's family rather than my own." This absent, never-appearing Prebendary is a somewhat dark subject, brought forward only when the best Cathedral society fails of effect, as a garnish to Mrs. Skelton's tallest talk. "But they are the delight of artists, each in her different *genre*. 'The Miss Skeltons are more than beautiful,' the great Thoreau said to me when we were last in London. 'The Miss Skeltons are deliciously, quaintly picturesque!'"

So to the great Thoreau's charge, perhaps, may be set down the golds, greens, and crimsons of which we have spoken.

The eldest, Pansy, is florid, stout, short, and in her thirtieth year. Pansy dresses in chintz, with flame-coloured "housewife" pinafores, wears her hair in a tangle above a pair of beetling brows, knits socks for the poor, even

between the courses of a table d'hôte dinner, and is oftentimes put warmly forward by the Veteran, in the absence of the younger sisters, or in the neighbourhood of curates, as a Home Treasure.

The second, Diana, is tall, acidulated, intellectual; a Diana with a greenish complexion, a tip-tilted nose, improvised eyebrows, and the least excellent voice that ever issued from a woman's lips. She represents the genius of the group; is seldom without a Cambridge text-book in her hands, talks about Greek particles and the Differential Calculus, affects the First Republic as regards her flow of drapery, and in feature is said, by her relatives, to resemble Charlotte Corday.

Aurora, aged twenty-six, is peony-cheeked, laughing, indiscreet; the hoyden, the irrepressible, gushing, spoilt child of the family. On the present occasion Aurora wears a short white frock, a sash, and very brilliantly-


coloured stockings. Her sleeves are tied, baby-fashion, on her shoulders with crimson knots ; buttercups and daisies, in a wreath, are twined amidst her dishevelled locks. "The cottage maid of Wordsworth, who had a rustic woodland air," so Diana will whisper to you in sisterly confidence, "is thought by painters to be well embodied in our little wild Aurora."

"Yes, if we were at our own place at home, the naughty child would be in the schoolroom still," runs on Mrs. Skelton archly ; "but we manage, Di and I between us, to coax her sometimes to her lessons. Aurora is sadly backward at her French verbs,—you are not a mother, Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, you know nothing about these minor worries,—and her arithmetic still falls short of the mark. On the other hand, her proficiency in music is beyond her years. Rora, my sweetest, don't you see that Mr. Longmore is hoping for his after-dinner song !"

To other eyes than those of maternal affection it might look as though Mr. Longmore were hoping for nothing; with so unexpectant an air does the young Oxonian enjoy his after-dinner smoke.

“Not brought down your notes? Now, Rora, that is only shyness, and, indeed, after the sums your poor papa and I have spent on your music, you ought to be able to sing without a book at all. Don’t you remember the bishop’s daughters in our charming Auchester circle? No, it was before your introduction into society. Pansy and Dian will recollect them. How quite too delightfully they were able to give us song after song without notes! On one occasion, when we were dining at his Lordship’s, I can recall Mr. Archdeacon Prettyman observing——”

“I know it would bore Mr. Longmore into fits to have to listen,” interrupts Aurora, rolling her black eyes deprecatingly in the young



Oxonian's direction. "Mr. Longmore knows my songs by heart from beginning to end. He has told me so, often. And then the men are such horrid inconstant creatures! 'One foot on shore, and one——' Don't listen, Mr. Longmore, I won't allow you to listen, of course we are not talking of you—they care for nothing but change and novelty. I declare I'll never sing to please a man again while I live. I vowed so only last night, didn't I, Di?"

Mr. Longmore, at this pathetic declaration, throws away the end of his cigarette, and crosses the terrace. He glances down, as admiringly as he may, at the peony-cheeks and shoulder-knots, the brilliant stockings, the dishevelled locks, the withered daisies and buttercups of poor Aurora.

"You don't want me to repeat what I have so often said—that it gives me pleasure to hear you sing, Miss Skelton?"

A certain tenderness is in his voice, or his hearer thinks so. Aurora Skelton bridles, hangs down her head, then moves away towards the salon window. The girl is really prettyish, despite the exceeding vulgarity that comes to her by education and inheritance; has, at least, the negative charm of being fresher, fairer than her sisters. She has also fallen in love, of an easy kind, with the good-looking undergraduate, who, during the past fortnight, has been vainly endeavouring to "read" in the Grand Hôtel Scherer!

And Hugh Longmore is weak enough to feel flattered.

The young fellow, in very truth, has over-high ideals of womanly grace and refinement. Aurora Skelton, educated partly on the pavement of an English cathedral town, and partly in the public rooms of foreign hotels, is a flirt in the fullest acceptation of that most odious word. As well ask grapes from thistles as

look for modest feminine charm in the daughter of such a mother! From her maiden bower on the second floor, Aurora casts down eye-shots at young Longmore, while her hair is still *en papillote* of a morning. She intercepts him on his way to breakfast, pursues him from terrace to terrace, breaks in upon his morning's reading in the remoter corners of the gardens, informs him, half a note flat, during the afternoon hours that she is "weary," "alone," "fading away," or "owre young to marry;" and she jars upon every finer sense the lad possesses, at all times.

But Aurora has bold black eyes, a pair of ruddy lips, white teeth, and a dimple in her left cheek. She has also a mother. And Longmore, unguarded by sister, cousin, or friend, is in greater peril than he suspects.


Refined, fastidious youths, fresh from the cloisters, of taste the most conservative, have ere this been seen to form lifelong alliance

with coarseness, possibly through chivalrous inaptitude at repulsion ; possibly through some mysterious physical affinity hard to understand.

The rosemary, we know, will not live with the laurel, nor the laurel with the vine, nor the cabbage with the olive. Yet does garlic planted in the neighbourhood of the rose supply the flower with a richer fragrance ?

“ If Mr. Longmore wishes for his song, Aurora, run for your notes at once. . . . That dear girl’s diffidence must positively be got over,” whispers Mrs. Skelton into Longmore’s ear when Aurora has obediently tripped away. “ You cannot think what it costs her, Mr. Longmore, even to sing before you. ‘ I know Mr. Longmore is a finished critic,’ the child will often declare to her sisters. ‘ Such exquisite classic taste, such knowledge, such culture ! If I could only feel sure of his approval ! ’ ”

“ Of my approval — madam,” stammers Longmore, looking wretched.



“In *my* singing days I was in the light and comic style,” cries the Veteran, skittishly tapping the young man’s arm with her fan. “Indeed, there are some who still care to hear me in ‘Misthress Malone.’” But Aurora is all for the pathetic. You know, Mr. Longmore, I am quite a believer in community of soul, and I must say you seem to have the same tastes in everything. . . . Ah, Rora, my dear,” the young lady at this moment peeping forth from the salon window, a music book under her arm, “be sure you give Mr. Longmore something good and serious—‘The Lost Chord,’ say, to lead off with.”

And Aurora gives it him ; out of time from first to last, and thumping a heated accompaniment, every third bar of which contains at least one wrong note. But Longmore, although a passionately keen lover of music, is not a stern judge to-night. The critical faculty, at two-and-twenty, is apt to be partial when a

showy girl, more than half in love with one-self, heaves palpitating sighs and flings upward melting glances through her eyelashes as she sings.

“The Lost Chord” (how often do Aurora’s hearers wish that chord had been lost indeed!) is ruthlessly murdered. Then follows a massacre of Schubert’s “Ave Maria” and of the “Serenade” of Gounod. Happily, there are states of mind in which a man can be distinctly possessed by two sets of impressions at once. Leaning over Aurora’s shoulder, patiently turning the pages of her book and enduring alike her wrong notes and her ogles, Hugh Longmore catches a reflected glimpse of Leman in an opposite mirror; can imagine himself on the lake’s blue breast half a dozen miles away, the dip of the sculls, the light lap of the waves, the trickle of mountain rivulets for music; his pipe, his *Æschylus*, and the delicious sense of being alone and unbored for companionship.

By the time they return to the terrace the sun has sunk over Jura's purple crest ; Venus shines tremulously in his wake ; the light-forsaken mountains have gone from amber to crimson, from crimson to ashen gray. Already a few faint points of light stud the deep vault of heaven.

“‘The Ram, the Bull, the Heavenly Twins,’” quotes Mrs. Skelton playfully. “I don't know how the young ones feel, Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, but to me the air strikes chilly. Pansy, Dian, my loves, why not take a last turn round the gardens while you have still light ? Coax some flowers out of Monsieur Scherer, if you can find him, for to-night's ball.”

Thus craftily does the Veteran ever dispose of her contingent forces. Pansy and Diana have had, or have not had, each her day ; they must leave Aurora an open field when Aurora's star chances to be in the ascendant.

"As for you two delinquents," she cries, kissing the tips of her fingers with gruesome gaiety to Longmore and his companion, "I do not doubt you have some mischief still to plot together. Aurora, sweetest child, be steady! Don't let your spirits run away with you. I am sure Mr. Longmore would like a description of that last Auchester Festival, and the delightful county people you and your sisters met at the Palace."

Aurora replies by a burst of discordant Skelton laughter; and Longmore, with nerves absolutely set on edge by the sound, gives a moral shiver. Hopeful sensation for a man on the brink of folly; impossible sensation for a man on the brink of love!

"Ma does go on so about that dull old Auchester. As if I cared a fig for square-toed canons and musty bishops' Palaces." Thus Aurora, dancing with infantine vivacity, shoulder-knots, buttercup wreath and all,

along the terrace. "For my part, I never want to set foot in an English cathedral town again. Do I look suited for stiff parties, Mr. Longmore, for clerical society, in general, and bishops' breakfasts in particular?"

"You ask me, honestly. I am afraid I must answer: 'no.'"

"A place like Auchester did all very well for Dian. Di is so awfully clever. Not a book you mention but she is up in it, and as to the magazines—Di can read eleven serials at once, and keep the eleven different love affairs clear in her head. Pansy, of course, was in her element, because of the curates. I am not clever, as you, Mr. Longmore, must have found out, and with regard to curates——"

"With regard to curates?" repeats Longmore, as Aurora Skelton pauses.

The young lady is taken afresh with a fit of laughter, somewhat more hysterically dis-

cordant than the last. Bad creature that he is! What does, what can, Mr. Longmore mean? Curates, indeed! He will be asking her opinion of barristers next. A shame, that it is, to chaff her like this, but she, Aurora, knows what he is hinting at. Mr. Longmore is to be a barrister himself before very long, is he not?

An alarming depth of meaning is in her voice. Young Longmore glances away towards the valley of the Rhone, away towards the mountains, upon whose topmost peaks the fairy-like pink after-glow has once more shone forth. Abruptly, the thought flashes on him that a train will leave Clarens Station for Aigle at seven thirty-five to-morrow morning. At Aigle a man has only to buckle his knapsack across his shoulder, start for the mountains, and——

“The one place on earth for me is London,” says Aurora, shrewdly translating

for herself the expression of the lad's face, and becoming cured of hysterics on the instant. "We have quite a legal connection in London. Aunt Julia, a sister of my papa's, is married to Sir Joseph Sweeting's cousin. The great Q.C., you know."

Longmore knows. How often has that apocryphal legal connection been tantalisingly waved, like the matador's red flag, before the embryo barrister's sight?

"And next season I hope to pay Aunt Julia a visit. You will come and see me, won't you, Mr. Longmore, if you are in town?"

"I should be delighted at all times, in all places, to do that, Miss Skelton."

"And we can look back to these happy Clarens days," says Aurora, speaking with the stereotyped little glow and little shiver, and punctuating the sentence with sighs. "We shall have grown wiser, both of us."

We shall wonder, I dare say, how we could ever have been so foolish !”

“ We . . . you . . . will have abundant opportunity for hearing good music in London,” answers Longmore, returning with laudable presence of mind to his muttons.

Miss Aurora Skelton glances at the young man sharply. He is still watching the distant valley of the Rhone, and his countenance does not play him traitor.

“ When I stay with my Aunt Julia I shall be in the very highest musical circles, and T. S. can always run up from Aldershot to take me about to concerts and operas.”

T. S. is a fond abbreviation of “ Thomas Skelton,” the only male hope of the family, and a lieutenant in one of Her Majesty’s marching regiments ; of whom we shall be forced to see more, hereafter.

“ Hearing the best professionals,” proceeds Aurora, “ or, if Aunt Julia is generous, a dozen

good finishing lessons would give my singing a little of the bravura style, would they not?"

"*Finishing* lessons!" repeats Longmore, his emphasis supplying unintentional irony.

"Yes. Just enough to learn a few show songs, you know. Of course I've done with *sofeggios*." Aurora Skelton manufactures her barbarous Italian plural unblushingly. "What I want is bravura. I had a course from one of the best masters last winter at Nice, and that is what he told me I wanted—bravura."

Longmore's eyes are still turned in the direction of the mountains, and he remains silent. The last changeful hues of the day that is dead have paled, re-flushed, gone pale again. A greenish flame-like lustre shows forth, in inky relief, the angular peaks of Cubli and the Jaman.

"La, gracious, if there isn't the moon! I do so love to see the moon rise." Like Emerson's young lady, poor Aurora adores

poetry, roses, the moon, the sky, and—cavalry officers. “If we turn sharp round the left corner of the terrace, we shall see her come up over the Dent du Midi to perfection.”

And turning sharp round the corner of the terrace proves, as chance will have it, the immediate salvation of Hugh Longmore.

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNING OLD VIOLINS.

FOR he and his companion are brought within focus of a balcony on the first floor of the Hôtel.

And across the balcony railing leans a girl whose eyes, even in this half light, sees farther than most people's, whose brain is rapid at deduction as a child's, and whose incisive promptness of action might quicken jealousy in the breast of an Alexander or a Bismarck.

Across the balcony railing, serenely contemplative of lake and mountains—yet in the very mood of restless idleness that renders the human heart promptest at meddling in the love affairs of others—leans Joyce Dormer,

the younger of the ladies whose violin case and whose exclusiveness — it may be the attendance of whose Latest Victim — have fired so many feminine breasts in the Hôtel Scherer with indignant curiosity.

A girl in a sad-coloured gown, tall, graceful, fair, and twenty; a girl slender of throat and limb, with a face on whose sweet outlines the peachy bloom of childhood seems yet to linger, hands so charged with expression it sets you dreaming of fine harmony but to look at them, and a pair of large, admirably lucid blue eyes. Such, at a glance, is Joyce.

She catches sight of Longmore and his companion, hears a scream or two of Aurora's laughter, a burst of Aurora's mock enthusiasm, then draws hastily back behind a half-closed venetian shutter and watches them: watches them, not that she may gather facts whereupon to rest a theory, but contrariwise. It is Joyce Dormer's habit to feel ere she thinks,

to judge of things, women and men by instinct, and at first sight. Facts have to fit themselves into her judgments, afterwards, as best they may.

“Mr. Farintyre, come hither.”

Low is her voice and tuneful, yet does a certain slowness of utterance, a suggestion rather than an actual tone of weariness, contrast pathetically with her airy girlish figure, with the blooming summer of her face.

A very fat, very blonde young man (of the order of men evidently whose fortune is in their pockets, not their brains) lies dozing on a sofa at some little distance. He rouses himself after one or two ineffectual efforts, rubs his eyes with both very fat, very blonde hands, then rises and, without much lover-like alacrity in his movements, crosses the room to Joyce's side.

Quite of the first water must be this young man's tailor, idem, his haberdasher

and bootmaker. You think of them all, tailor, haberdasher, and bootmaker, at the earliest moment of your introduction to him. You seem to hear the jingle of his money at every movement. Frankly vacuous are his round, reddish-brown eyes, vacuous is the smile by which, no very perceptible jest to the fore, he shows the whiteness of his teeth. His expression is one of heavy good humour, of contentment with the world that affords daily physical enjoyment to Mr. John Farintyre. And he wears ostentatious jewellery. Miss Dormer's sway can, surely, not be so absolute over him as current gossip alleges. He wears ostentatious jewellery!

"Do you see those two people in the garden!" says the girl, beneath her breath. "Do not look at me, please—I must tell you, Mr. Farintyre that you have fallen into a terribly bad habit of doing so, lately. And do not look at the sky above or in the lake

below. Try," pronouncing each word, syllabically, like one who smooths down a hard sentence for a child's comprehension, "to pull your scattered faculties together and to do simply and literally as you are bidden. You see that good-looking English boy, and the—the young person he is talking with on the terrace yonder?"

Joyce's lover, if lover he be, shakes his head and rubs some still lingering mists of sleepiness out of his eyes. Then, in the perfectly level, flat voice whereby fatigued young gentlemen of the present day give expression to their feelings, he ejaculates :

"Longmore of Corpus, by Jove! With a lady."

"Longmore of Corpus, *not* with a lady," repeats Joyce rather cruelly. "Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Farintyre, that yonder poor lad is a college friend of yours?"

"Friend," observes Mr. Farintyre, "is a

strong word. Hugh Longmore and I were in different sets at Oxford——”

“Of that I am perfectly sure,” interrupts Miss Dormer, with emphasis.

“Believe he may have got introduced to me at some of the college wines—quite a different set of fellows, you see. Lincolnshire rector’s son — screwing along on a wretched three hundred a year, reading man, went in for professors’ lectures and tea, æsthetic culture — tell me if I’ve got hold of the jargon right—and all that sort of thing.”

“I understand. Never smuggled a fox-terrier into college in a brown paper parcel, never drove tandem through plate-glass windows in the High Street, nailed up a Proctor’s door, or painted any of the public statues pea-green. In spite of these demerits,” says Joyce Dormer coolly, “he is an exceedingly nice, refined-looking boy, and, friend or no friend, he

is a fellow-creature and shall be saved. Please do not look at me, Mr. Farintyre," with a quick impatient movement turning her head aside, "but listen attentively to what I am saying. Longmore of Corpus shall be saved."

Mr. Farintyre, forbidden the first natural use of his eyes, does the next best thing—at how immeasurable a distance—open to him. He looks at Aurora Skelton.

"Handsomish gurl, that!" The remark is made in a tentative tone rather than one of certainty. "Not very unlike Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity, only worse form."

"Has Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity a false ear? Has Rosie Lascelles the flattest, harshest voice that ever issued from a human throat?"

"Rosie pipes like a linnet. Ask any one who saw her in that burlesque on Frou-frou"—Mr. Farintyre looks almost interested—"if Rosie Lascelles sings in tune!"

“Then, what right have you to libel her by such a comparison. The young person with shoulder-knots has been singing false notes at Longmore of Corpus half the afternoon, and again since dinner. How can I tell it? At whom should the false notes have been sung, if not at him?”

“At—at some other fellow, perhaps.”

“Mr. Farintyre, I did not think you would have attempted to argue in such a cause. Neither should I have suspected you of ill-timed attempts at humour. Far from his natural protectors, poor little lad!” Longmore of Corpus stands just within six feet one in his slippers. “A stranger, in a foreign land—it is your duty, as an Englishman, to look after him.”

“Oh, Longmore will get along all right,” remarks John Farintyre lazily. “The gurl looks the sort to draw him out. Shy of ladies, generally, high ideals, you know—

looks upon women as superior sorts of beings, and that. Not a man *I* ever had anything to say to."

Forth darts a mischievous flash from Joyce Dormer's blue eyes.

"You will have something to say to him now, yes, before another two minutes are over. 'Will you come into my parlour,' asks the spider of the fly? And the innocent fly, through your moral support and agency, Mr. Farintyre, shall take courage and answer: 'No.' Go down to the man who is not your friend, and tell him that I, Joyce Dormer, desire to make his acquaintance. Does that not please you? Then exercise your fertile brain in hitting upon some better excuse. And quickly! The spider draws her webs closer—the lady's voice has sunk to a whisper. There is not a moment to lose."

A wooden staircase descends, *châlet* fashion, from the long line of balconies on the first floor

to the flower gardens of Hôtel Scherer. Down this staircase a heavy, not too willing figure makes its way ere another minute has passed ; Miss Dormer, her fair head powdered with silver by the moon, keeping watch over the development of the plot from above. Mr. John Farintyre whistles, somewhat tunelessly ; he gazes round at lake, sky, and mountain, then, hands in pockets, lounges up to the pair of sentimentalists on the terrace, and by a drawled : "How are you ?" renews his college acquaintance with the man who is not his friend.

Will the spider affrighted run ? Will Miss Aurora Skelton take refuge in the proprieties.

Miss Aurora Skelton does nothing of the kind. Too artless a child of nature to wait for an introduction, the young lady enters, at a moment's notice, into the freest, easiest conversation in the world with the newcomer. She seats herself on the ivy-grown parapet that at this point divides the terrace from a slope

of purple vineyard ; then, clasping her hands round her knee, in an attitude copied, doubtless, from some illustrated love scene in one of Diana's eleven serials, rolls up her black eyes ingenuously in the direction of Mr. Farintyre.

"How well she would suit him, in the absence of Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity!"

This, or some analogous thought, crosses Miss Dormer's mind as she looks down, unnoticed herself, upon the group.

"A moonlit trip to Chillon? Well, to be sure!" So ring the loud exaggerated accents of Aurora Skelton. "What an *awfully* jolly idea!"

"After an acquaintance of one minute and a half," interpolates Joyce mentally, "to credit poor John Farintyre with ideas!"

"I should like it *awfully*, any evening you choose, that is to say if ma would give me leave, and I know she would. Dian and I used often to row about with the gentlemen at home, I

mean from the Pension Potpourri down at Nice. Besides T. S. is coming in a day or two, and he could chaperon us. What do you say, Mr. Longmore?"

"I say," repeats Joyce half aloud, and with growing determination, "that Mr. Longmore shall be rescued. Yes, John Farintyre may conduct the awfully jolly expedition to Chillon, with or without T. S., if he likes. Longmore of Corpus shall be rescued. Now, for the means of his deliverance. . . . Ah, I have it—Stradiuarius!"

She flies across the room at the inspiration ; three or four moments later, behold her gliding softly back, her violin between her hands, to the window ! Standing within its embrasure, just where a slant of moonlight falls with ivory whiteness on her figure, Joyce Dormer begins to play.

The strain she chooses is admirably suited to the scene and moment ; one of those Nativities

in which the old composers loved to reproduce the tunes performed in early summer, by the Pifferari, before the street shrines of the Virgin ; a strain pure, passionless, as her own girlish face.

Execution is not her strong point. While she lives, Miss Dormer will possibly never compass a grand bravura passage, a single striking or bizarre effect. In the true Italian quality of making her violin sing, in the broad simple vocal character of music like this, music in whose traditional triple tempo one "feels the starlight," Joyce is already, at twenty years old, an artist.

After the nativity, she begins a solo sonata, one of the famous Twelve of Corelli. Ere the first andante movement is half over a hasty step crosses the terrace, approaches stealthily up the wooden stairs, then stops. And a smile of victory steals round Joyce's lips. She throws herself with spirit into the quick tripping

movement, the sparkling semiquavers and brilliant staccato runs of the second part. With mingled fire and delicacy her bow lingers over the third movement, a broadly majestic adagio. Few amateurs can play a fine adagio, for the reason that here the spontaneous gift of melody, Joyce's special endowment, is the only thing that avails. By the time she reaches the last bars of the final presto, a man's figure throws its shadow suddenly between herself and the moonlight.

Miss Dormer starts away with a little frightened gesture, that, to say the least of it, is *ben trovato*. At the same moment the big drawling voice of John Farintyre at once dispels every suspicion of romance, and explains the situation.

"Mr. Hugh Longmore, college acquaintance, fond of Mozart and Beethoven, up in classical music and that sort of thing. Mr. Hugh Longmore—Miss Dormer."

Joyce bends her head coldly. She stands motionless, her eyes downcast, her violin clasped between both white hands upon her breast.

And Longmore feels that he has committed an indiscretion.

Where is all the easy assurance, where the confidence in his own power and the weakness of woman engendered in him during his quasi love-affair with Aurora? What is there in that cold salutation, in that pair of slender folded arms, that they should paralyse him back to the worst shyness of his schoolboy days?

“I am afraid you will call it a great intrusion, but I hoped—I mean, I feared—that is to say, Mr. Farintyre thought that you might be prevailed upon to play again.”

For a few moments Joyce refrains, obdurately, from helping him. She stands mute, frozen, while the poor fellow stammers and colours and repeats himself; enjoying his con-

fusion, perhaps, as a cat enjoys the palpitating misery of a mouse.

Then she lifts up her gaze of sweet, most steadfast blue, to the young man's face.

"Do you care for the violin *truly?*" she cries, moving a step towards him in the indistinct light. "Do you ask me to play, as people ask one to dance a quadrille, from a sense of duty, or because my playing would give yourself pleasure? Oh, if you are a real music-lover, you shall hear just as much of my Stradiuarius as you choose—I will get my mother to accompany me. Mr. Farintyre, run up to the second floor, please. Mamma's number is fifty-five, the room exactly over this one, and say we should like some music. Come in, Mr. Longmore."

And by a little wave of the hand, by a softening that just falls short of a smile around the lips, she promotes young Longmore, on the spot, to the rank of an acquaintance.

Mr. Farintyre obeys Joyce's commands with the promptness of one well broken to the duties of fetching and carrying, and Longmore, a man of conjectural habit of mind, finds himself speculating, with a sensation of absurdly keen jealousy, as to the probable relations that exist between the two.

Farintyre, though brainless, is rich, the only son of a long-established, well-accredited city stock-broker. Farintyre drove the best turn-out of his time in Oxford; rode the best horses at the Heythrop meet; gave the most extravagant wines and dinners of any man at Merton.

The Dormers are poor, travelling around the Swiss lakes, according to Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, with a pair of portmanteaus, a shabby violin case, and . . .

"*Fa, fa, sol, fa,*" goes a rapid sweep of Joyce's bow across the strings.

Even in this moment's preliminary tuning,

Longmore receives an impression, never to be effaced, of the girl's rare and finished excellence of posture; the quiet shoulder-joint, the firm and flexible wrist, the exact right-angle of bow; delightful graces all of them to one who appreciates with ear and eye alike.

"Flat, again! The air of Lake Geneva most certainly disagrees with violins. Stradiuarius is as sensitive to every change of weather as a barometer. You care something for Cremona violins, I hope, Mr. Longmore?" still screwing up the strings as she speaks. "Then you will envy me mine. It belongs to the master's finest period, and does not bear the name of Amati like the earlier ones. If you like to look nearer you will see the label, 'Antonius Stradiuarius Cremonensis faciebat, 1720.'"

Young Longmore crosses to her side. "I don't know whether you can read the letters at that distance," she remarks, warily holding

out her Stradiuarius for his inspection. "The second morning call Mr. Farintyre made on my mother and myself he adroitly managed to let my violin fall, and on that occasion I vowed never again to trust it into less sure hands than my own. Perhaps you would like to come just a fraction closer?"

This fraction brings Miss Dormer's silky hair somewhat dangerously near the young Oxonian's face. She continues her lecture on Cremona violins with undisturbed gravity.

"1720, yes, that was in the master's golden time. Hear," tapping the sounding board lightly with her finger, "how the very pores are full of music! Look, when one holds it sideways, at the marvellous curve of the back, at the cutting of the F holes. One can believe that violin wood was taken only from the sunny side of trees. A kind of sunshine seems to linger here still, under the mellow varnish, and as for the weight — feel it! I am not

afraid, now that I know you two minutes better, of trusting Stradiuarius into your hands."

Longmore looks over the violin, inch by inch; he detects beauties here, asks questions there; shows, altogether, so singularly keen an interest in the history, ancient and modern, of this instrument, that the lecturer's blue eyes begin to glance gravely at him in the moonlight.

"It was through undeserved good fortune that my Stradiuarius ever became mine." As she remarks this, Miss Dormer moves slightly away from the young man's side. "When I was quite a girl, more than two years ago, it was my whim to possess a genuine eighteenth century violin, and . . . a friend mamma and I had at that time promised me a Stradiuarius, if love or money, chiefly money, could procure one."

"Not Mr. Farintyre?" interrupts Long-

more, who is at an age still, when men's lips, wisely or unwisely, blurt out the uppermost thought.

For an appreciable instant Joyce hesitates, looking at him with direct, discerning glance.

"Mr. Farintyre! We made his acquaintance in the course of this last London season," she remarks quietly. "Mr. Farintyre must have been at Oxford in his mid-career of academical idleness at the time I talk of. No, the friend who gave me my Cremona, my dear old Stradiuarius——"

Taking back the violin abruptly from Longmore's hand, she clasps it with a gesture that in another woman one would be tempted to call affectation to her heart. Precisely at the same moment the door opens, Mrs. Dormer and John Farintyre enter the room, and the history of Stradiuarius—not without its importance as regards Hugh Longmore's life—remains a fragment.

“This is Mr. Longmore,” says Joyce, in her subdued voice, with the total absence of that artificial compound usually called manner. “Mr. Longmore wishes to hear my violin, mamma. Will you accompany me?”

During the past fortnight, Longmore has grown to associate the terrible word “Mamma” with rouge, wrinkles, warranted smiles, a scarlet shawl, pink cap-ribbons, and an ever-impending sense of his own capture. He finds himself in the presence of a girl, or so Mrs. Dormer looks, seen through the dusky gauze of moonlight; a girl with a sleek little uncovered head, with an infantine profile, and with a pair of big, blue-gray eyes, over-innocent in their expression.

Over-innocent! That, I believe, is Longmore’s first, perhaps it may prove his final, thought on the subject of Mrs. Dormer. The expression of those big, blue-gray eyes is over-innocent.

She advances, John Farintyre, in the background (did ever woman tread so softly as do these two?), and offers the young Oxonian her hand with an amount of cordiality nicely proportioned to the lightness of his purse and the undoubted advantages of his person. For Mrs. Dormer conspicuously possesses the finer shades of manner her daughter lacks; makes up, indeed, by ultra-proficiency in the science, for whatever intentional disregard of the ritual of Mammon may be shown by Joyce.

“Very pleased, indeed, to make Mr. Longmore’s acquaintance.” This is said in a voice soft as an Eolian harp, yet with a certain frigidity of accent that young Longmore feels he is intended to feel. “A college friend, Mr. Farintyre has been telling me, so I think, Joyce, dearest, we may already say, a friend of ours. And a lover of music? Ah, these are, truly, the charming accidents

of travel. We are moving slowly south, Mr. Longmore, to join my husband. Mr. Dormer has, for years, been an impassioned bric-à-brac hunter, and at the present moment, is literally so laden with cinque cento carvings and old china as to be anchored at Naples. Darling Joyce, is it not true? Your poor papa's brackets and teapots have anchored him fast?"

Darling Joyce has crossed to the piano: with her Stradiuarius tucked, in true virtuoso style, under her chin, she stoops, and after striking "Fa" sharply, for her pitch, goes on with the screwing-up of her violin strings.

"The piano is neither Erard nor Pleyel," she observes, glancing across towards Longmore. "But poverty will make the best musician accustomed to sorry companionship—will it not, Stradiuarius?"

And lightly, with a quick change of position, she rests her cheek, or Longmore

suspects her lips, upon the time-blackened sounding-board of her violin.

At the obnoxious word "poverty," John Farintyre, who has sunk resignedly down upon the sofa, reddens to the roots of his hair.

"Your beloved Stradiuarius will have as good companionship as you choose before long," he observes, in a tone, half gallantry, half growl.

"I am afraid not," cries Joyce. And for the first time Longmore sees her smile. Miss Dormer has the rare charm of laughing scarcely at all, and of smiling only when she is really amused. "As soon as we are settled in our Nice lodgings for the winter, mamma will hire a piano from Eberius. The good old Jew has the very worst instruments in the world, and I fancy gives us the worst of all he possesses, probably because our circumstances compel us to bargain about price."

"Price! As if the price of a thing could

ever matter." John Farintyre remarks this with the air of a Sardanapalus.

"It matters a good deal when you are hiring a piano in a Riviera watering-place," is Miss Dormer's calm answer. "It matters infinitely when you have at once an ear for music and a limited purse. 'A soul by nature pitched too high'—is the quotation correct, Mr. Longmore?—'by fortune brought too low.'"

"I must accompany you so well as to make everybody forget the quality of our piano," cries Mrs. Dormer, in her conciliatory smooth voice. "My love"—in that short, sweet appellation there lurks a tone that Longmore, prone to judge by trifles, recognises as a distant reprimand—"what kind of music, I wonder, would our audience like best?"

"We will play, Mr. Longmore, a selection of airs from 'Carmen' first," answers the

girl briskly. “‘Carmen,’ I must tell you, Mr. Longmore, brings back my youth, my first season, more than any other opera. . . . Oh, it is very easy for you to look disdainful, Mr. Farintyre. I hold that old things are best, and that it is wholesome to be reminded every now and then of dates.”

When the mother and daughter have taken their places, Longmore’s glance wanders from the two fair heads to the accessories by which they are surrounded. The room is but the ordinary private salon of Swiss hotels: a room bare of furniture, destitute of adornment. But Mrs. and Miss Dormer, after inhabiting it a day, seem to have filled every nook and corner with the delicate charm of their own presence. Music lies on the piano, a bunch of wild flowers and a little gray glove are beside the case of Joyce’s violin on a side-table; two or three leather-bound books, within the embrasure of the window,

a morsel of half-finished tapestry, a work-basket—and the picture is complete.

Mrs. Skelton and her daughters devastate Europe encumbered by no inconsiderable stock of stage properties. "Impossible to live," says the Veteran, "without one's ong-tourage! My girls, you see, have such delightful *recherchey* tastes, Di in particular. Diana positively cannot exist without elegance." And so, in each fresh room the Miss Skeltons inhabit, are scattered around carvings, statuettes, photographs, engravings; things of artistic value, it may be, in themselves, and yet that become simply so many unsuggestive details of vulgar upholstery when taken with their context—the Miss Skeltons.

Mrs. Scipio Leonidas travels around with luggage sufficient for a caravanserai; with morning, afternoon, dinner, and ball dresses; with diamonds; with a Russian Samavar, an English medicine-chest, a pug-dog, an abigail,

and scrupulous French novels, *ad libitum*. "My habits of life are *that* luxurious," the lady has been heard to confess, "that I cannot stop a night on the road without opening at least three of my overland cases." And her drawing-room (she invariably takes the costliest one of every hotel at which she stays) is—the faithful reflex of Mrs. Colonel Scipio Leonidas P. Briggs.

The Dormers' dress is plain, almost to eccentricity. They have no lady's-maid; they have no statuettes; no ongltourage! Yet it comes to pass that the mere atmosphere they inhabit, the unadorned evidences of their everyday occupations, affect Hugh Longmore like some flower's unexpected fragrance.

As he listens to their music, as he watches the two soft profiles in the moonlight, as he yields himself up, without a struggle, to the electric, perilous influences of the moment,

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the young undergraduate is sensible of growing and distinctly inimical feelings towards Mr. John Farintyre.

That gentleman, in an attitude of more than ease on a sofa, contrives to keep his eyes open through the hammering rhythm of the opera's introductory theme; he nods vigorously through the bull-fighter Escamillo's song, and is comfortably asleep by the time Joyce's bow, with suave and sonorous power, is rendering the striking phrase in D minor, the pathetic leading motive of the work. When a final fortissimo at length betokens that José has plunged his dagger into Carmen's heart, Mr. Farintyre raises himself drowsily about a couple of inches, drawls "Thanks, very pretty," between two yawns, and then remarks that it is time to light up the gas.

"Light up the gas, keep out the moonlight," cries Joyce, "close the piano and the windows, and let us settle down to a game of

Napoleon or écarté. Do not defend yourself, Mr. Farintyre ; I know that is what you mean. Poor Mr. Farintyre detests music," she adds, turning with an explanatory air to Longmore, "and an evil fate seems to have decreed that he shall, for a while, be our travelling companion. The usual story of the square peg in the round hole. Instead of lighting the gas we will decide on our next piece. Shall we play a duet of old Viotti's for a contrast ?"

"We ought to consult the opinion of our hearers," says Mrs. Dormer, turning her head and giving Longmore the full benefit of her large eyes. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would call them handsomer eyes than her daughter's ; they are, indeed, Joyce's, but thawed ; to the hundreth man the charm might be in the ice. "Our taste, Mr. Longmore, is, I am afraid, severely old-fashioned. With the exception of this somewhat tinsel piece of work, Carmen, there is scarcely one piece of

popular music that Joyce can be prevailed upon to play.

“ ‘Carmen, mia Carmen, adorata,’” sings Miss Dormer, in a low voice. “Don’t say anything against poor Bizet or his opera to-night, mother.”

“I repeat only what the best critics have written, my love. The Wagnerish notion of introducing the Leitmotiv—those two singular bars, with their superfluous second, at every critical moment, is striking, but scarcely more than a trick. Most certainly it is not original. Is not the entire opera of ‘Lohengrün’ based upon the change of the A major chord to that of F sharp minor?”

“I shall love Carmen for ever and ever,” says Joyce Dormer with decision. “So I suppose it is certain that my taste inclines towards tinsel. Mr. Longmore, what shall be our next performance? We look to you for a decision.”

“I should like whatever you are kind

enough to play for me," says Longmore, crossing to the instrument. "A duet of Viotti's," he adds, making a bold, but hazard shot, "most of all."

"Ah, you know him, you care for Viotti's simple, grand old music?" cries Joyce, raising her bow, eagerly.

"I know that you mentioned his name, Miss Dormer. Nothing more."

"Viotti should feel flattered! Under circumstances like these, mamma, you are the best judge of what is suited to us all—Mr. Longmore, ourselves, and—and Mr. Farintyre. You have an instinct for majorities, you know—which flatterer of our acquaintance told us that?—and I have not."

"If I am to decide," says the elder lady, "and as it is too dark for us to see a note, I propose that we keep to something unambitious: 'From North to South,' say; the piece Mr. Farintyre likes."

And Mrs. Dormer chooses well. The piece "Mr. Farintyre likes" is a popular, simply-set collection of the world's national anthems. The crustiest tune-hater could scarcely demur at patriot hymns, rendered with spirit, in an exquisite hour of mingled dusk and moonlight, by dilettante fingers fair as these !

John Farintyre, waking up, applauds appreciatively. Is not "God save the Queen," one of the two melodies he can distinguish negatively from all others, brought into the performance ?

"Brava, brava !" he cries, with a resounding clap of his big hands. "I call that good music. None of your blessed sonatas and cantatas, your Corelli's and Viotti's, but something a man can understand. Music with a jingle in it !"

Joyce turns quickly round—a little pivot-like curtsy enabling Longmore to see that her foot is of make as slender as her hand. She

gives Farintyre a mocking glance of her blue eyes.

“After such a graceful compliment, Mr. Farintyre, you shall be rewarded by our shutting up our instruments. Not another note of Corelli’s or Viotti’s shall you hear to-night. Would it be too great an exertion, do you think, for you to look about for my violin case?”

Is her manner one of entreaty, command, indifference? Longmore, fond of puzzling over rigidly unanswerable questions, puts this one to himself. The lad comes fresh from the schools and all that the schools can teach; has Grote and Mommsen at his fingers’ ends; brims over with Plato, “sawn up into quantities by Aristotle,” and is not unversed in the latest German philosophies. He is also, by temperament, an analyst, given to geometrical subtleties, for ever asking the wherefore of abstract passion and of possible motive.

In common everyday human concerns, especially such concerns as happen to be complicated by the working of a girl's heart, Hugh Longmore, at two-and-twenty, is ignorant as a child.

"The night is a great deal too fine to be wasted within doors," observes Joyce, when she has carefully locked up the case of her Stradiuarius. "What do you say to a moonlit stroll, mother! Do you remember the little plateau high among the hills to which you and I scrambled our way two autumns ago? Why not all adjourn there now?"

"The plateau above the chestnut woods—with the wonderful panorama of Chillon and the upper lake. Charming——"

But here an ominous sound causes Mrs. Dormer to stop short. She glances, interrogatively, at the face of Joyce's suitor.

He is yawning, without even the decent shame that prompts us to suppress our yawns.

Lakes and mountains of a morning, Corellis and Viottis of an evening, are by no means poor Mr. Farintyre's ideal of enjoyment; no, not with the added delight of a moonlit stroll, the intellectual treat of hearing Joyce discuss books and music with the man who is not his friend!

And, reading aright the expression of her intended son-in-law, Mrs. Dormer's own taste for chestnut woods and wonderful panoramas cools on the instant.

"I think I shall let you young people find your way to the plateau without me," she remarks, sinking into an arm-chair, and passing her white fingers over a brow fair and unfurrowed as a child's. "I have just a suspicion of headache, and am more in a humour for quiet and rest than for scaling romantic hill-sides."

"Not in a humour for *écarté*, of course?" suggests Farintyre, getting up with an effort

from the sofa, then crossing over towards the bell.

“The very thing to do me good, Mr. Farintyre. It is only fair you should wipe off that heavy score of gloves you lost to me at Grindelwald. Ring, *please!*” Mrs. Dormer is a little woman made up of pleading emphasis, of soft cooing italics, of the constant indirect flattery that makes itself felt through tones, rather than words. “We will begin our fight at once. Gas, we will have none of—only a couple of wax candles to enable us to see the moonlight the better. Joyce, my dear, be advised. We have had enough fatigue for to-day.”

Miss Dormer moves to the window; she looks out with longing eyes across the lake, clearly purple as the sky above, the fairy-like lights from half a score of boats dotting its surface, and with a glorious silver path shining straight away towards the mist-girt valley of the Rhone.

“Star-gazing versus écarté,” she remarks, as a wave of cool and delicate night air flows in across her face. “If it were not for braving the dragons—I mean for running the gauntlet of the salon windows—I should be tempted to make my way through the chestnut avenue towards Glion. I want to see how the first snows look by moonlight on the Col de Jaman.”

“The dragons will muster in greater force than usual,” says Longmore, who has followed her. “M. Scherer has promised us a ball to-night, and an extra row of dowagers will be sure to line the salon windows. If you will accept my escort, Miss Dormer, I think you might perhaps get past them, alive.”

“But is your time at your own disposal?” asks Joyce, rather maliciously. “Are you not wanted for the ball? Are you positive your friends will not get up some moonlit expedition later on in the evening, to the castle of Chillon?”

“Oh, Chillon is for another occasion,” cries out John Farintyre. “I got let in for Chillon by moonlight before I knew what I was about. Decidedly approachable, that friend of yours, Longmore, and not half bad-looking for the sort of style. By the way, what is her name? The young woman with ribbons, you know, that you were spooning on, down by the wall, there?”

“*Spooning!*” repeats Hugh Longmore, his bronzed face reddening like a girl’s.

“Or she on you; much the same thing, isn’t it? Afraid I came up at a critical moment, from the embarrassed look of both parties.”

“The young lady was Miss Aurora Skelton, a recent acquaintance, a—a daughter of Prebendary Skelton,” says Longmore, a certain look in Joyce’s blue eyes provoking him to stand on his dignity. “Mrs. Skelton is obliged to live most of the year out of England, for

climate's sake. I believe they generally spend their winters in the South!"

"Skelton, surely that name ought to be familiar to me," Mrs. Dormer remarks placidly. "Skelton. Yes, I am convinced we must have met Mr. Longmore's friends often . . . on the Promenade des Anglais, at Nice (if you insist on going out, child, you must really wrap up). There was a Mother." Singular what keen-edged meaning a flute-like voice can throw into so simple a statement of facts. "And there were Daughters."

"Daughters, very decidedly," says Mr. Farintyre, growing jocular. "The moment I saw your friend, Longmore, she reminded me of Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity—Rosie Lascelles, minus the form, and minus the talent. If an actress does go in for attitude," here Mr. Farintyre's tone becomes one of conviction, "she does it well."

At this second mention of Rosie Lascelles

of the Ambiguity, Joyce Dormer steps out on the balcony. She says something in a low tone to Longmore, who is at her side, then makes the usual feminine pretence at "wrapping up" by knotting a small cambric handkerchief about her throat.

"Joyce, my love, why should you not play us a solo," cries Mrs. Dormer, glancing round from the table where John Farintyre is organising candles and cards. "One of your own compositions, darling; or, better still, an improvisation. Depend upon it, Mr. Longmore would like to hear you improvise."

"Mr. Longmore shall be gratified on some future day, mother. We are going out now to have a look at the first snows on the Jaman. Perhaps I may prevail on Mr. Longmore to give me a lesson in astronomy."

"Delightful night for a stroll," observes John Farintyre, with a tolerable show of magnanimity.

“In the gardens of the hotel, yes.” And Mrs. Dormer takes one of her quick looks at the young man’s face. “But not beyond. Crime is positively becoming of everyday occurrence in Switzerland. I see, in the *Lausanne Courier*, that the diligence was stopped last Thursday, near Chambéry. A Sister of Mercy was robbed of her purse and an elderly Swiss banker——”

“Mother,” interrupted Joyce, a well-defined shade of impatience in her tone, “is this Chambéry? Am I a Sister of Mercy, or a diligence? Is Mr. Longmore an elderly Swiss banker? Play out your match at *écarté*—amuse yourselves well—and if I am not back by midnight, let the lights be extinguished and the hotel shut up. All that remains of me will be found somewhere between this and the summit of the Col de Jaman, to-morrow.”

CHAPTER III.

A MOONLIT SONATA.

THE salon windows are innocent of dragon or dowager; the salon, itself, newly beeswaxed and garnished for dancing is, as yet, empty.

Joyce Dormer and Longmore pass out through the silent, dew-freshened gardens, to the high road, white, as though paved with marble, in the moonlight, they turn away by a narrow footpath in the direction of Glion, and after a quarter of an hour's steep ascent find themselves on the open mountain's side. Straight before their sight stands black, pine-covered Cubli. To the extreme right are the seven peaks of the Dent du Midi: a world of purple vineyard lies at their feet. Crystal

clear has grown the atmosphere. The big, near stars flash and palpitate in many-coloured fires of emerald and ruby. The sharp, needle-like Jaman, the lofty Nez, are printed in dense relief against a background of luminous sky.

It seems to Longmore in this ampler ether, in this pale Elysium light, as though he and Miss Dormer had been acquainted for years.

“Star-gazing on the whole is better than écarté,” the girl remarks, seating herself with the bon-garçon air of brusqueness that she carries off with such grace, upon a projecting point of boulder among the heath. “And star-gazing might be improved by one’s understanding a little about the stars. Years ago I recollect gaining an astronomy prize in some class mamma made me attend in Paris, and at the present hour I do not know a planet from a star of the first magnitude, when I see them together. Of course you have the heavens at your finger-ends. What boys learn is so

ground into them at school that, in spite of their best endeavours, they cannot lose it all again as girls do."

"The Girton girls, for instance," suggests Longmore. "No Winchester schoolboy in my day knew more about stars than that they existed."

"But you could tell their places? You must have learnt something in that grand observatory at Oxford. You know, at least, where *that* came from."

As she speaks the great vault has suddenly whitened with the hundred thousand miles glissade of some shooting meteor.

"I have a notion that I could find the Great Bear and Cassiopea," says Hugh Longmore. "I might even discover Arcturus, perhaps, on a pinch."

"Point them out to me. If you will kneel down on the heather, here, our eyes will be on the same level. It would never do to tell my

mother and Mr. Farintyre that, although they may have enjoyed their *écarté*, our astronomy lesson came to nothing. We will begin with Arcturus."

"Arcturus," says the young Oxonian, taking his place somewhat shyly at Miss Dormer's side, "is the large very yellow star just in front of us."

"You must be more explicit, Mr. Longmore. I see a dozen large very yellow stars just in front of us."

"Arcturus is immediately above the tallest of those three large trees. You are looking quite in a wrong direction, Miss Dormer—follow the direction of my finger."

Joyce inclines her head, in grave obedience, until it is within a few inches of Longmore's. Her eyes follow the direction towards which he points.

"And has Arcturus a proper motion?" she asks, much as though she were questioning a

professor of sixty with a watchful mamma and governess in chaperonage. "You see how thoroughly I have forgotten everything. Can Arcturus be the old Boötes, going fifty-four miles a second, that we used to learn about in Paris?"

The lesson on astronomy is a long and a serious one. Seriousness characterises Joyce Dormer's smallest movements, heightens what I should call the moral picturesqueness of her character. Sweet though her face be, it is unsmiling; her voice is below the concert pitch of artificial society-talk. Bright, sympathetic, full of unaffected interest in life, it requires an effort to imagine this girl of twenty getting out of breath about anything. Pre-eminently does she inspire you with a sense of rest, subtlest of charms, at all times, trebly subtle to a man who for a fortnight has suffered under the galvanic gushes, the over-strained noisy enthusiasm, equally false and equally little, of an Aurora Skelton!

When young Longmore's last word on the subject of stars is spoken, Miss Dormer consults her watch.

"What! must you return?" he asks.
"Are you afraid that Mrs. Dormer is nervous still over her recollections of elderly Swiss bankers and the Chambery diligence?"

"Not the very least in the world. My mother and I flatter ourselves we do not possess a nerve between us. As long as mamma can make another person happy she is contented. Of course she makes Mr. Farintyre supremely happy by playing *écarté*."

"Oh, of course," assents Longmore.

And a sudden uncertainty comes over him as to whether John Farintyre be most in love with the mother or with the daughter.

"He is not, as a rule, amusable, I should say," observes Miss Dormer casually.

"Who—Farintyre? Well, really I knew little of his tastes at Oxford. My father is the

rector of a poor Lincolnshire parish, Miss Dormer, and the keeping of college terms, for me, meant money. Farintyre's father is a millionaire. You can imagine that our paths lay wide of each other. A man reading eight hours a day, and finding all the pleasure he can afford in a walk along the high road, or a quiet pull on the river, is not likely to come across——”

“The undergraduate who is an adept at Loo, Van, and Nap (these are Mr. Farintyre's own recollections of the Alma Mater), and whose only reading is of *Bell's Life* and the *Sporting Times*. Precisely. It is because Mr. Farintyre is fond of cards and not fond of books that I should call him unamusable.”

After this, there is a moment's silence, then: “You, of course, should know best?” suggests Longmore, a note of interrogation in his voice.

“I have had fair opportunities for judging

during the past three weeks. Out of the twenty-one days we have spent in Switzerland, we have had eleven of rain—Mr. Farintyre is to a certain extent travelling with us, I mean, he stops when we stop, he sees what we see—and these eleven days have enlightened us all as to our several resources. I, personally, am never dull; I have Stradiuarius. My mother is the most occupied little creature living, a great reader, a good worker, an indefatigable correspondent. But Mr. Farintyre!—If mamma were not so clever and so patient at card-playing, I think the poor fellow would have been bored into committing suicide.”

“Bored when he was—I mean,” says Longmore, happily stopping short on the brink of a compliment, “when he could have as much good music as he liked.”

“De gustibus non est disputandum,” says Miss Dormer, pronouncing her Latin very prettily. “You, perhaps, Mr. Longmore,

might not be bored if you were to travel with mamma and me.” .

The point-blank coolness with which she advances the surmise renders a flattering answer impossible.

“But Mr. Farintyre does not know one note from another, boasts, indeed, that he cannot distinguish between Mozart and Madame Angot. Sometimes I think Mr. Farintyre is to be envied. When one remembers all the bad music there is in the world, the possession of an over-fine ear, or even of a cultivated taste, would seem a doubtful benefit.”

The subject of bad music brings them down with inductive celerity, with few fine intermediate shades, to the recollection of Aurora Skelton.

“That young lady deliberately slaughtered the ‘Ave Maria’ of Schubert in your presence this evening, and you abetted her. She sang three modern English songs, each more out of

tune than the last. You listened. You applauded. Why?"

"Because—because I had no choice of doing otherwise," is Longmore's answer.

"Mr. Longmore, that defence is too lame. Do you not know, as a physical fact, the highly destructive effect false notes have on the nerve-centres?"

"I am afraid I know only too well experimentally."

"But have you mastered the theory? 'Whenever two series of aerial undulations interfere with one another'—my first German music teacher made me learn this by heart—'the effect upon the auditory nerves is that special form of discomfort cognised as a dissonance.' Your friend's singing throughout is 'that special form of discomfort cognised as a dissonance.' Yet you not only listen; you encourage her. Will you tell me why?"

If Longmore were discussing the question

with a man, discussing it, say, in the truthful atmosphere engendered by midnight tobacco smoke and a bachelor fireside, he would possibly make mention of poor Aurora's personal charms, of the dimple in the cheek, of the bold black eyes that consciously flatter every person of the opposite sex who looks into them.

On this lonely mountain side with Joyce Dormer's quiet gaze encountering his own, he replies, stammering, that he supposes bad music, if one has a musical taste, is better than none, in out-of-the-way places. That is to say, it is an atrocious thing to hurt people's feelings, and Miss Aurora Skelton was so good-natured as to offer to sing for him to-day, and——

“And Mr. Longmore was content to play the part of Tartuffe,” cries Joyce, rising to her feet. “Don't attempt to vindicate yourself, sir. Bad music is infinitely worse than none,

and you or I, knowing it to be bad, ought to stamp it out whenever we have a chance. Do you hear the cry of that far-off grasshopper?" she goes on. "Those two cracked, monotonous thirds seem to me more pathetic, fuller of a real impassioned song, than half the 'Remembrances' and 'Alones,' with their pretentious far-fetched accompaniments, that fill the Regent Street shop-windows."

"But if 'Remembrances' and 'Alones' give pleasure to the majority?" says Longmore, "to the millions of men and women, mostly what Mr. Carlyle calls them, for whom such things are written?"


"The poorest song may at least be sung in tune. Mr. Longmore, if you are so warm in your defence of false notes I shall begin to think bad things of you. It may be wise to change the subject. Would yonder goat-track lead us down to Clarens, do you suppose, or over the brow of the cliff? Over the brow of

the cliff. Then, by all means let us take it. You may be pioneer." As she speaks, Miss Dormer surrenders her hand to the lad's keeping. "But we will meet our fate in company. If we could get just sufficiently far into danger to make one's heart beat quicker!"

But no danger of a physical kind awaits them. The goat-track leads, not across the brow of the cliff, but to a tiny knoll of greenest velvet, hemmed in by mountain larches, carpeted with upland flowers, a spot where it would scarce surprise you to come upon Caliban and Ariel discoursing in the moonlight, or to see Cobweb and Moth and Pease Blossom playing hide-and-seek among the grass.

A look of genuine, childish pleasure brightens over Joyce Dormer's expressive face.

"This is worth eleven days of rain! Worth all the dismal evenings we have spent since we came to Switzerland. 'Au clair de la lune.'"



Under her breath she runs through a bar or two of Lulli's delicious melody. "I have to thank you, Mr. Longmore, for lighting on anything so charming. We must bring my mother here the first fine afternoon, and Mr. Farintyre, and a kettle, and drink our five o'clock tea, *al fresco*."

"Five o'clock tea, with music," suggests Longmore. "It is a promise that I shall hear you play something of your own composition, and the violin, like the voice, needs no accompaniment out of doors. Would you trust me, for once, Miss Dormer, to be the bearer of Stradiuarius?"

"Not on the occasion of the tea-party," answers the girl. Hugh Longmore, reading between the lines, interprets her tone to mean not in the society of Mr. Farintyre! "If time were at my own disposal—or rather, if I had genius, not facility, it would be good, indeed, to bring Stradiuarius to a wild place like this—

to seek one's ideas, not from the printed score of others, but from Nature direct. Unfortunately, we, amateurs, are echoes of echoes. I can embroider a little with my bow, as you shall hear, any day you choose ; but it must be on some real musician's motive. My improvisations, as mamma good-naturedly calls them, are pale copies of the old Italian pastorals. I just approach the threshold of originality, and yet stand outside in the cold for ever."

Speaking thus, Miss Dormer moves a few yards onward, and then stops short. Around, behind her, is the never-to-be-forgotten little glade—the glade with its quiet larches, its fresh, wet grass, with Arcturus shining overhead. Immediately in front, a footpath leads down to the prosaic region of white-walled vineyards and gardens, to the Hôtel Scherer, to a pair of prosaic card-players losing gloves to each other at *écarté*.

Joyce pauses for a second or two, her gaze turned skyward, her bare head surrounded by an aureole like a saint's. The wind, keen off the mountains, blows back the soft hair from her forehead.

"Did you ever remark, Mr. Longmore, that flowers have their moonlight smell? It surrounds us at this moment. Well, in the hottest London concert-room that peculiar cold sweetness comes back to me always when I hear Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata.'"

"The sonata dedicated to the Countess Guicciardi," says Longmore, looking hard at his companion's clear face, her buoyant airy figure. "The coquette who, after being loved by Beethoven, married a composer of ballet music. No, Miss Dormer, I know nothing about the effects of moonlight on vegetation. Flowers, with one or two exceptions, give out their strongest scent in the caloric rays of the sun. As facts prove, however, that the electric

light is equally efficacious in producing chlorophyll in leaves, it may be assumed——”


“Please don’t be scientific!” breaks in Joyce, imploringly. “One may like a little exact science as regards the stars, but about flowers—No. Facts? Oh, if you are so sceptical as to require them, I will convince you instantly.”

She hesitates, looking around her; then stoops above a mound overgrown with wild thyme. She bruises a mass of the dewy, odorous blossoms between her fingers.

“Flowers must have the caloric rays of the sun upon them, you tell me, in order to smell sweet. Then what, pray, do you say to this?”

And, abruptly, two little perfumed hands, white, cold as the moon’s light itself, are held up across the young Oxonian’s face.

Will the scent of wild thyme ever fail to recall this moment’s intoxication to Hugh




Longmore? Would the cynicism of every man of the world living convince him that Joyce Dormer was not acting from a pure and girlish impulse?

CHAPTER IV.

ASKING FOR TRUMPS.

GASLIGHT streams forth, murdering the moonbeams, through every open window of M. Scherer's state salon. Mrs. Skelton, in plumes and paint, thumps a waltz tune upon a piano, tinkling, worn-out, sharp of tongue as herself. The three Miss Skeltons fly around in the arms of three thick-booted, tweed-jacketed tourists, newly kidnapped, poor fellows, on their descent, footsore and blistered, from the mountains, and who will depart, affrighted, by the earliest train for Lausanne to-morrow! Twice, regularly, each week is a like batch of Innocents Abroad mercilessly executed, to pianoforte



accompaniment, by Miss Aurora Skelton and her elder sisters.

Mrs. Dormer and John Farintyre, their match at *écarté* ended, watch the ballroom from the grass terrace outside ; Mrs. Dormer's neutral-tinted dress, her soft, fair face, her composed step, affording a grateful contrast to the be-ribboned, over-heated votaries of noise and glare and rapid movement within.

"We say, every day, that the world is a small place, Mr. Farintyre. It seems to me that the world affords human beings a pretty wide scope for the exercise of their bad taste. These dear creatures, with their piano, and their smartness, and their gas, think they are enjoying the mountains, *are* enjoying them, doubtless," adds Mrs. Dormer liberally, "after a fashion."

"Well, yes, there is no accounting for taste," John Farintyre assents, with a somewhat surly glance in the direction of Glion. "Some old-fashioned people, you see, might

call this a fitter hour of the night for dancing than for making mountain excursions."

"Are you thinking of Joyce? Oh, there is not the smallest occasion for fear," returns Mrs. Dormer, with admirable maternal philosophy. "Some weak-nerved mothers are in a constant fever about their children. I have never been in a fever about Joyce. It was not my system. From the time Joyce was in short coats I have trained her to take care of herself. And she has done so. I positively do not remember her meeting with a bruise or a scratch like other children."

Mr. Farintyre's wits do not seem to furnish him with an adequate rejoinder. He glances still, and with undiminished surliness, in the direction of Glion.

"I must confess it would be as wise to start on these little expeditions by daylight. But in Joyce's case one must always make allowance, must one not, for artistic proclivities?"

“Artistic proclivities! A very convenient phrase!” says Mr. John Farintyre.

No change of feature or of voice betrays that the ill-humour of this speech strikes home to Mrs. Dormer.

“Joyce is an artist to her heart’s core, although, happily for herself, dear child, she is destined to lead the life of any ordinary woman. Joyce seeks inspiration for her music in situations where other girls of her age——”


“Would be content, no doubt, to seek a flirtation,” interrupts Farintyre. It will be seen that this young gentleman’s manners have been formed among such disciples of progress as hold Lord Chesterfield obsolete. “Men, unfortunately, do not draw these fine distinctions. Miss Dormer’s numerous admirers judge of her when she is in the inspiration-seeking mood, as they would judge of girls who are not geniuses, and get their vanity flattered accordingly! Now this young prig, Longmore——”

“Longmore?” exclaims Mrs. Dormer, resting her taper fingers upon the arm of her son-in-law presumptive. “And who is Longmore? . . . Ah, of course,” after a moment’s innocent hesitation, “the young Oxonian you introduced to us this evening—Longmore or Longford, did you say? A nice, refined fellow he seems—like all prigs.” In her inmost soul is Mrs. Dormer guilty of a sarcasm? “Mr. Longford, one may feel sure, knows the district well. This makes Joyce’s safety doubly certain.”

“Her safety?” repeats John Farintyre between his teeth.

But Mrs. Dormer does not, or will not, detect the ill-humour of the ejaculation.

“If your friend plays whist we might organise a rubber occasionally. It is time Joyce stored up provision for her old age by learning to like the game. And talking of whist reminds me, Mr. Farintyre, you said something to-day at lunch that I did not clearly



follow." Mrs. Dormer unable to follow a remark of Farintyre's! "Some story, was it, showing that you may not ask for trumps after you have already had the lead and refrained from playing one?"

She draws him away, bearing her weight on his solid arm, looking up, her fine eyes full of interest, to his face. When the whist-table story has been set forth with such dramatic liveliness as poor John Farintyre possesses: "I held knave of clubs, you understand, fourth round. Queen put on second hand; diamonds led through me, and then I called for trumps, and—and, begad, my partner returned the diamond and lost the trick!"—when that incomprehensible story, I say, has been stumbled through, criticised, retold, she glides cautiously on to matters connected with the hunting-field—matters about which Mr. Farintyre, like many another young city Croesus, knows little, and loves to talk much.

“We women are so engrossed with small aims—our charities, calling-cards, art, music, and the last shape of bonnet with which we are threatened for the winter—that we scarcely know more than the outside names of men’s pursuits. You were giving us an absurd account the other day of how some Frenchman headed the fox in the Pytchly hunt, and I believe Joyce and I both laughed without knowing why. Now tell me, exactly and truly, what ‘heading the fox’ means.”

The explanation takes time. John Farintyre does not readily warm to the expressing of ideas, even his own, even when the ideas relate to the three or four subjects which awaken in him genuine interest. But Mrs. Dormer, with the acuteness of a Q.C., cross-questions here, throws out a note of admiration there, from the hunting-field gets him to Ascot, from Ascot to Norfolk, from Norfolk to Hurlingham.

When the ingenuous youth is once brought

to Hurlingham he becomes loquacious. In recollections of handicap sweepstakes, exciting ties, birds "grassed at thirty yards," and all the other details of pigeon-slaughter, one may surely hope that the lover has merged in the sportsman, that the unhappy subject of moonlight walks and artistic proclivities will be forgotten! John Farintyre becomes loquacious, and Mrs. Dormer, set free from that heaviest of social labours, conversation-making, lapses, gratefully, into silence.

CHAPTER V.

THOSE OYSTERS.

At this very time Joyce and Hugh Longmore are slowly re-entering the Hôtel Scherer gardens. Afar off, Joyce recognises the figures of Farintyre and of her mother, and stops short.

“I can see,” she cries, “by the bend of Mr. Farintyre’s head that he is amused—for the first time, I really believe, poor fellow, since we came to Switzerland. What happy inspiration can mamma have lighted upon? In any case, you and I are not wanted, Mr. Longmore. It would be cruel to interrupt them.”

“The night is young. We have not seen

the early snows upon the Jaman," suggests young Hugh Longmore.

Incipient sentiment is in his tone, and Miss Dormer crushes him promptly.

"We have not seen the snows, but we have had quite as much star-gazing as is good for us," she remarks. "We have sung our romantic moonlit duo at the back of the stage. Now for a comic scene or two before the footlights. What is life but a mixed opera?—an opera, in this case, it seems, with a ballet!"

As she speaks Joyce turns down a dark, trellised path which, at the end of twenty or thirty paces, brings them directly in view of the ballroom windows. The dancers still dance; the Veteran, with unflagging fingers, still thrums antiquated waltz tunes upon the battered piano.

In a low and somewhat mischievous tone, Joyce Dormer requests Longmore to point out "his friends" to her.

“Miss Aurora Skelton I recognise. Her relatives I can guess at. Who is the thin little lady waltzing backwards?—the lady with a profile, a Spanish mantilla, diamonds, and eyes?”

“That,” answers Longmore, “is Mrs. Colonel Scipio Leonidas P. Briggs, of New Orleans. Her partner is an Anglo-Saxon-speaking Parisian, freshly arrived in Clarens, and between them they are executing the only civilised dance to which the world has yet attained, the Boston. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs would herself call it the ‘Bors’on.’”

“Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs is that marvellously rare being—a graceful woman.” For Joyce has all an artist’s generous appreciation of the good points of others. “Yes, Mr. Longmore, and she is so in spite of the ‘Bors’on’, in spite of her exaggerated partner. We Nineteenth Century Englishwomen attitudinise and mimic,” adds Miss Dormer. “We

get painters to design our dresses, we take the celebrities of all the ages for our models, and succeed . . . to the point of becoming articulated lay-figures ! The first little American girl one meets, overloaded though she may be with French finery, as much surpasses us in her grace of movement as the Roman women surpass us in their walk and carriage. Perhaps the sun is wanted for the ripening of this kind of beauty, as it is for grapes and olives."

"Have you lived all your life in sunshine?" asks Hugh Longmore quickly.

Ere he has had time to repent, as Joyce would certainly give him occasion to do, of the compliment, the piano ceases. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs and her partner come forth into the night.

The invalid wears a dress of amber satin, a colour that well suits her pallid alabaster skin. A Spanish lace mantilla is thrown over Mrs. Scipio's head. Among the carelessly-arranged

waves of her black hair rests a solitary purple-damask rose.

Her partner is a young gentleman with nervous eyes, a waxen complexion, and a head of the type that schoolgirl novelists describe as Shelley-like—plenty of intellectual brow, plenty of fair curls, plenty of nose: mouth and chin wanting. This young gentleman's accent is nasal, his manner Frenchified; his clothes are made by a Parisian tailor; a gardenia is in his buttonhole.

"Passable outline," he remarks, indicating the finest sweep of mountain in Europe, with a couple of languid, primrose fingers, and the air of a man who has heroically resolved to endure Nature—for a fortnight.

"Well, the Alps *are* handsome," Mrs. Scipio Leonidas admits. "If I was a well person," she has been dancing the Boston for exactly sixteen minutes without halting to draw breath, "I should take some sublime

trips around among these scenes. But I am quite too sick and fragile for strong exertion. It's my dyspepsia, you see, that's my trouble."

She is looking lovely as a dream. The darkness of the night seems reflected in her lustrous eyes, one diamonded hand clasps her lace mantilla across her throat, the other rests upon her partner's arm. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas Briggs by moonlight is more than pretty. She is poetic.

The mood of the Shelley-like young gentleman softens. It occurs to him, perhaps, that Nature, in some society, might be endured—a little longer than a fortnight. He hints at the loneliness of his partner's lot, at her quasi-widowhood, at the evil effect of moral unhappiness upon a sensitive organisation.

Mrs. Scipio Leonidas shakes her head: a quiver comes around her finely chiselled lips.

"It's more than half of it the diet," she remarks with feeling, and in a tone of deep

earnestness. "The diet in these watering-place hotels is vile. That's about the key-note to my dyspeptic trouble. Look at my hand! Was ever such a bird's claw seen? My dresses fall off me. I'm positively obliged to give up wearing my marriage ring. My—yes! I wrote and told the Colonel so, last mail. But what can you expect with such a cuisine? Why, to speak of oysters alone," says Mrs. Leonidas, warming up with her subject. "They give you what they call oysters, certainly—poor shrivelled tasteless bivalves, here in Europe. Think of them in New York!"

A look of soft and mournful retrospect crosses the lady's features; her voice modulates.

"You get those oysters with breakfast, roasted on the half-shell, or devilled, or steamed. You get them as an appetiser before dinner, raw, luscious, and juicy—my yes! sweet, tender, portly. You get them *at* dinner, stewed, tossed up in crumbs, cooked in

pies, put into sauces. You get them at all times, for about one franc, French money, the dozen. These regrets are weak, I know. It don't do in absence to talk about home." And something very like a tear shines in Mrs. Scipio's dark eyes. "But you see, sir, one's heart feels like overflowing at times. Mountains and lakes, and travelling around may suit for a well person. A dyspeptic invalid wants a considerable deal more nourishment than can be taken out of handsome scenery."

And upon this, Mrs. Scipio Leonidas, delicate, ethereal-looking as moonlight itself, glides away upon her partner's arm into the deeper shadows of the terrace. At the same moment, the figures of John Farintyre and Mrs. Dormer come suddenly within the full glare of the salon windows.

"You have returned, Joyce darling," cries Mrs. Dormer, her voice moved by just a tremble of soft anxiety. "In spite of Mr.

Farintyre's laughing at me, I was beginning to shiver at the thought of possible robbers and precipices."

"We did our best to get into danger," answers Joyce carelessly; "but, alas! in vain. It seems part of my fate always to be safe, over safe. How did your *écarté* get on, mother?" she adds, as Farintyre and young Longmore stand face to face, in the true attitude of men who never mean to like each other, and without exchanging a word. "You have won half-a-dozen pairs of gloves, I hope, from Mr. Farintyre?"

"Mrs. Dormer has won a dozen and a half pairs of gloves of me," says Farintyre, in a tone that jars, inexplicably, on Hugh Longmore's ear.

Joyce's small feet twinkle a step or two, keeping time to the dance music within.

"Victory! mamma and I wear the same size. When you write to Jouvin, ask my

advice, Mr. Farintyre, as to the colours you shall order."

Mr. Farintyre does not answer. He stands, heavily shifting from one foot to the other. He makes a sorry attempt at whistling, looking steadily the while across Longmore's shoulder in the direction where Joyce Dormer is *not*.

As he stands thus, a stir of muslin flounces, a flutter of ribbons, make themselves heard at the nearest salon window. Aurora Skelton, dishevelled from the dance, but partnerless, gives him a speaking glance through a fold of curtain.

And a quick, revolutionary movement stirs in poor John Farintyre's breast.

He is free : how many times a day has Joyce Dormer not reminded him of the fact, on rainy days spent in Swiss inns, especially ? What shall hinder him from striking out an original path of action ? Why shall he not try

reprisals, show this girl who makes his torture her amusement, that others can play the same game, enlist the same jealousies as herself? Why should he not invite Aurora Skelton to dance?

“Capital polka that! Looks a tolerable floor, too,” he observes, moving somewhat nervously away from Mrs. Dormer as he produces a pair of gloves from his breast-pocket and returns the glance of Aurora Skelton’s eyes with interest. “More than half a mind to go in for a turn—‘take the creases out of my knees,’ as the Californian young lady said in *Punch*.”

“You think of going *where*, Mr. Farintyre?” asks Joyce, advancing a perceptible inch or two, still in time with the music, in his direction.

John Farintyre repeats the joke, feeling that it does not sound more witty in the second edition. He makes some halting remark to the effect that gentlemen being scarce this

evening, he, as a dancing man, ought to do his duty. Ladies seem to be standing out, and——

“Do you mean that you would condescend to dance, really and truly? Well, then,” cries Miss Dormer, as though moved by a sudden impulse, “I invite you to be my partner. We will have an extra dance of our own, here, on the greensward, and with the moon to light us. Do you refuse?”

In this moment Joyce is seduction personified. A smile—that rare, delightful smile—irradiates the face upheld to Farintyre’s; her hands (the odour of wild thyme, no doubt, still clinging to them) are clasped towards him in a gesture of mock entreaty; an aureole of yellow light shines round her blonde and graceful head.

Hugh Longmore says to himself with conviction that he detests her!

“I thought you made a point of not danc-

ing extra dances, that *that* was one of your very few principles," says Farintyre, ironically emphatic. "You have told me so, I am sure, pretty often——"

"In crowded London ballrooms, no doubt I have. What mortal being could want to do more than stern duty at a London ball? In Clarens it is quite another thing."

"You put principle aside, Miss Dormer, in Clarens?"

"So thoroughly, that I am a suppliant for the honour of Mr. Farintyre's hand. Am I successful?"

And in another moment Farintyre's arm encircles the girl's slight waist. She rests her finger-tips upon his shoulder . . . ta-ra, li-ra goes the thumping polka tune on M. Scherer's piano . . . and off they dance along the terrace, now receding out of sight, now reappearing amidst the stage-like ebon and ivory effects of the moonlit garden.

Mrs. Dormer watches the two figures with serene absorption for some seconds, marking the polka-rhythm by one soft palm on the other. Then she remembers her good breeding, and young Hugh Longmore's existence.

"Have you remarked the singular greenish colour the lake puts on at night, Mr. Longmore? You can trace it at this moment like a river from Bouveret to Evian. Perhaps you would see what I mean if we were out of reach of gaslight."

And across the terrace with noiseless, youthful tread, Joyce's mother glides, Hugh Longmore, feeling a culpably lukewarm interest as to greenish colouring of the lake, following her.

"'Clarens, sweet Clarens,'" repeats Mrs. Dormer presently. "'Birthplace of deep love.' Do you care for Lord Byron's verse, or, like most men of this generation, are you a believer in Browning only?"

Hugh Longmore cares little for verse of any kind; Latin hexameters and Greek iambs having drilled the taste out of him at as early an age as they drill it out of most English public-school boys. He confesses the truth : over bluntly, perhaps.

“ Well, I believe all the best poetry is, at this stage of the Nineteenth Century, written in prose. If poets, like Göthe, would only exercise their imaginations upon a basis of fact ! ”

Saying which, Mrs. Dormer gives her companion a quick and comprehensive glance. A lad of his years who cares not for verse *must*, at the world's present age, she decides, care for science. And (although Hugh Longmore, personally, may be regarded as detrimental, a good-looking human factor much better omitted from the present sum of Joyce's love affairs) fragmentary feminine science-talk is an accomplishment which Joyce's mother can never refrain from exhibiting.

“When we came to Switzerland, three weeks ago, we put Tyndall’s ‘High Alps’ and, of course, ‘Childe Harold’ into our portmanteaus. We have been reading the two books alternately, with a marked preference for the ‘High Alps.’ Byron’s raptures about mountains and glaciers seem tawdri-ly theatrical, side by side with the plain speaking of the man of science. You remember that magnificent passage in which the sun is called the sculptor of the Alps? ‘It was he who raised aloft the waters which cut out these ravines, he who planted the glaciers on the mountain slopes, he who, acting through the ages, will finally lay these mountains low, so that the people of an older earth shall see mould spread and corn wave over the rocks which, at this moment, bear the weight of the Jungfrau.’”

Mrs. Dormer’s sparkling, dimpled face has grown grave, as with trained tone and delivery she makes the quotation. Thought is in her

eyes, a tremble of emotion round her mouth. Had this young undergraduate's taste inclined towards Rousseauism she could, with her talent of lending herself entirely to the moment, have recited for him the necessary half-dozen stanzas from 'Childe Harold;' have recited them with an interest in self-torturing sophistry, fevered lips, and beautiful madness, as warm as that which she now expends on glaciers and on mountains.

But Hugh Longmore, whatever his belief in his own knowledge of the world, is, at heart, no cynic. Hugh Longmore, unversed in the little feints and doublings of intellectual coquetry, never doubts that Mrs. Dormer's love for geological learning and scientific prediction is sincere.

And John Farintyre a short quarter of an hour ago believed the same; of course with the unimportant substitution of pigeon-shooting for geology, as the object of Mrs. Dormer's enthusiasm!

CHAPTER VI.

TOO DEEP FOR TEARS.

“You see, mamma, your liking is at second-hand. The clue to much fine philosophy may be found in that. If I had a sister or a cousin, placed as I am placed, depend upon it I could be attached to Mr. John Farintyre, vicariously !”

“We can, most of us, like where and how we choose, Joyce. Take me for an instance. I was not romantically attached to your papa when first we were engaged, when first we were married, even.”

“And afterwards ?” cries Joyce, opening her blue eyes wide.

As long as the girl can remember any-

thing, her parents, divided by a quarter of a century in age, have lived heroically apart : Mr. Dormer writing charming little lover-like letters to his absent wife, Mrs. Dormer constantly on her dutiful road to join her husband and his teapots in Italy—but apart, nevertheless.

“ Afterwards, child, I exercised myself strenuously in the most precious virtue a woman can possess or practise—toleration. Your poor father’s artistic tastes—(I am quite ready to admit the delicacy of his health)—drew him towards the soft do-nothingness of a Southern life. By an effort of will I early put myself so much in his place as to imagine that—for Mr. Dormer—such an existence might be the highest possible ! Quite other duties lay to my hand, Joyce. I had to think of you. When you were little, it was needful to live in climates,” notably London and Paris, unless Joyce’s memory be at fault, “ where

English children thrive. Later on, I had to think of masters and governesses ; later still, to keep up old connections, to form new friends. To the best of my power I fulfilled my duties, both as wife and mother ; guided, enlightened, always by one principle, that of toleration."

"You have an even temper, mamma," says Joyce, a little remorsefully. "I have not. You can put up in others, in John Farintyre, for example, with all the qualities most unlike your own. I cannot. And besides, mother—yes, you have told me so yourself"—for a moment Joyce's fair face blazes from temple to throat, then grows white again—"although you were not, as you say, romantically in love with my father, you never cared for any one else. Toleration, remember, may have come to you through other channels than it does, or ever can, come to me."

The village clocks along the lake shore

one after another have struck midnight, the lights are extinguished in Hôtel Scherer, the revellers at rest. But Mrs. Dormer and Joyce still linger at the open window of their sitting-room. A certain look upon the faces of both—of pained entreaty, despite its power, on the girl's; of cool determination, despite its smoothness, on the mother's—betokens that their talk is of other things than charities, calling cards, art, music, or even the last shape of bonnet with which we are threatened for the winter.

“Too much ‘caring,’ as you express it, for another ends in not caring enough for oneself. You ought to have learnt that bitter truth.”

“Did I ever say I had not learnt it, mother?”

“I do not see that you carry the lesson into practice. If on the threshold of life a girl chance to fall into any . . . well,” hesitates Mrs. Dormer, vainly seeking an euphemistic phrase—“any deplorable sentimental

mischief, it should, if she be wise, and when the first smart is over, become a stepping-stone, not a stumbling-block, for the rest of her days."

"It seems to me I am very wise," says Joyce. "Although the first smart of the sentimental mischief, after more than two years, is not over! In what way am I open to the charge of not caring enough for myself? My life is one long selfishness."

"You care, seriously and deeply, for nothing—except, of course, your violin-playing," remarks Mrs. Dormer, with an accent of quite unwonted humour. "Think of Sir Kenneth Grant—of your levity——"

"Mother," interrupts the girl, turning briefly round, then standing so that the two face each other full, "if we are to have recriminations let us also have plain-speaking. I accepted Sir Kenneth at a time when reason was dead in me. My heart was breaking over

my great sorrow—yes, my heart was breaking, though I wore no black, and went to operas and balls and garden parties through it all. And Sir Kenneth Grant was kind and so old—papa's age, or more! And I thought, God help me, he would look for no love of *that* kind from me, and you said that once married I should forget my pain. . . .”

“And when the wedding orders had been given,” observes Mrs. Dormer coldly, as the words die on Joyce's passionate lips, “and when the marriage settlements were drawn out, you told Sir Kenneth, one of my oldest, dearest friends, that you held it would be better to die, yes, and that you besought Heaven, night and morning, for death, sooner than that you should stand before the altar as his wife.”

“Sir Kenneth himself gave me an opening,” exclaims Joyce, with a face of marble. “He came upon me, suddenly, one morning—

have I not told you the story before? Sir Kenneth came in, unannounced, just as I was trying, through my tears, to look over some jewels that he had sent for me to choose from. And when he asked me the meaning of my tears, I answered him truly. You know the rest. You know how he was good and loyal and pitiful enough to absolve me of my word."

"And poor young Vesey Armytage?"

"Poor young Vesey Armytage was, really, and in fact, an admirer of yours, mamma," cries the girl, but in a lighter voice. "I will not be made responsible for Vesey Armytage's blighted happiness."

"And now, John Farintyre?"

"And now, John Farintyre. Mother, why this tragic tone? John Farintyre likes, it would seem, to travel about the world in our wake, carrying our shawls and losing our tickets and our luggage at the railway stations,

and hearing harsh things said to himself from morning till night. If, after seeing a great deal of each other, I do not grow to dislike him very much more, and if, as years go on, I decide on marrying at all, it is a settled thing between Mr. Farintyre and myself, that—we should begin to think over the question of becoming engaged in earnest.”

Mrs. Dormer’s cheek kindles: a flash of the eyes makes one understand how Mr. Dormer has found it in his heart to live apart from this angelic little wife of his during a good three-fourths of his married life.

“John Farintyre has more brain and more heart than you give him credit for, Joyce. He was talking to me, seriously, this evening, about a matter he has not courage to touch upon to you. If you could have seen his face after you had started with Mr. Longmore for your lesson in astronomy,” adds Mrs. Dormer with emphasis, “you would realise, perhaps,

that John Farintyre's patience may, one day, come to an end."

"I thought John Farintyre honestly and truly preferred playing cards with you. John Farintyre does not know one star from another. He does not care for pine woods and mountain wild-flowers, and talk about Beethoven by moonlight. His friend Mr. Longmore does. Such a nice boy Mr. Longmore is, mamma, and without a shilling in the world, he tells me, unless some day or other he should be able to work for one. I wonder," says Joyce musingly, "why the people I like are invariably people without a shilling."

"Do you mean to say that you 'like' this exceedingly commonplace, stiff-jointed undergraduate, after half an hour's acquaintance?"

"I feel that I could make a companion of Mr. Longmore, certainly. Why do you smile, mother?"

"I was thinking of some of your mistakes,

child!—of the people all over Europe you have felt positive would be companionable,” says Mrs. Dormer mildly, “until — you grew tired of them.”

Joyce walks restlessly away from her mother’s side.

“That is the worst thing of all, ‘until I grew tired.’ Yes, and I grow tired of everything, except of my Stradiuarius, which does not belong much to our outward life. It is useless, I am afraid, mother, this searching into the faults of my character. There is a fatal warp in me. I know it. On the day I lost happiness, something in myself, ay, in my very heart, was lost too. Mr. Farintyre must be content to make the best of me, faults and all, or to leave me.”

“Do you wish him to leave you, Joyce? Be honest. Would you have been content this evening, even, for him to join the dancers in the salon—to join them,” adds Mrs. Dormer,

“with a Miss Aurora Skelton, a partner too low for possible rivalry?”

Joyce reflects for some moments before answering :

“If John Farintyre were to marry some person better suited to him than I—say, if he were to marry Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity—I should feel relieved. Fancy *never* hearing the jingle of the Farintyre money again! As long . . . well, as long as things remain as they are—as long as the only son of the house thinks fit to run about the world in our society—I prefer seeing him at his best. He would not have shown to his best in the too congenial atmosphere of a Swiss hotel ball.”

“I am pained by your tone, Joyce: Lady Joan Majendie assures me that the Farintyres are a most excellent family.”

“Mother!”

“John Farintyre’s great grandfather, Mr.

Duncan Farintyre, was a Scotch laird living at the end of the last century on his father's small estate, in . . . Peebles, I think—Somewhere."

"Lady Joan's family histories want backbone. Must not everybody's great grandfather at the end of the last century have been living on his father's small estate . . . Somewhere?"

"But in the general social disruption that followed," says Mrs. Dormer, with large vagueness, "upon the first French revolution, Duncan Farintyre, like hundreds of other gentlemen's sons, had to seek his fortune, to sustain the family name, in business. How the good blood has displayed itself since, how honourably the Farintyres, step by step, have made their way, is proved by the brilliant fortune of the present head of the firm. On the score of cultivation, everything has been done for the son that Eton and Oxford *can* do."

"That is not saying much for Eton and

Oxford. John Farintyre rode the best horses of any man in his college, was celebrated for his ratting successes, and got sent down twice for practical wit with screwdrivers and paint-pots. Also, not having passed mods. by the end of his eighth term of residence, he was asked by those in authority to remove himself elsewhere. You look sceptical, mother. We will use Mr. Farintyre's own words in speaking of this part of his career: 'Was humbugged out of Oxford by the dons.'

"I know too well what your tone means," cries Mrs. Dormer, with chill displeasure. "I know too well how these hypercritical judgments are likely to end. You will keep John Farintyre (or John Farintyre's successor) in a state of cruel suspense for years, caring not so much for him as you would care for a dog who had been trained to fetch and carry obediently. Then when the best part of a woman's life, when the bloom of your youth is wasted——"

“John Farintyre (or John Farintyre’s successor) will throw me over, and you, mamma, will have a crabbed, disappointed daughter, looking a dozen years older than yourself, upon your hands. Never mind, little mother,” adds Joyce lightly, “if our fortunes come to the lowest ebb, there will be Stradiuarius. My music masters have all told me I could make a name as an artist. We will leave ‘a name’ alone. I could earn a living, probably, by going out to play dance-music—violin, harp, and French horn—at evening parties.”

A scene of the kind I am describing is rare exceedingly between Mrs. Dormer and Joyce. So superficially alike, that their everyday tastes and wishes are identical, so unlike, in truth, that each can barely guess at the other’s deeper feelings, this mother and daughter continually approximate, yet, like certain geometrical lines known to mathematicians, never blend.

When the polished surface of their lives does become ruffled, when a conversation by accident takes a pungently personal turn, or a situation borders on the dramatic, Mrs. Dormer on the instant rises to vantage ground.

Is it not a commonplace in domestic politics that a certain engaging and lachrymose weakness of manner shall always triumph over dry-eyed moral strength? What weapons cannot a soft little woman with "weeps" at command bring against an antagonist who loves her, and whose own emotions happen to lie too deep for tears?

"You confess that there is a warp in your character, that you have lost hope in life, that you care persistently for nothing. I know, I feel it. Ah, Joyce, and when you were little, was ever a child so quite too pathetically loving!" Here the large, over-innocent gray eyes reach suffusion-point. "I was very ill, once, when you were five or six years old, and

I was of course alone. With all his pleasantness of temper, with all his very genuine amiability, the witnessing of suffering in others was distasteful then, as now, to your poor father. Well, you stretched yourself outside across the door (I was quite affected at what the nurse told me afterwards), you declared you would not eat, would not be moved, dead or living, till you saw my face. Ah, and your joy when I got better! How you threw your dear little arms around my neck—how——”

But Mrs. Dormer's utterance is choked. Tears are coursing down the fair cheeks on which eight-and-thirty years have left no disfiguring trace; and in another moment Joyce, on her knees, is at her mother's side.

“Mamma, I love you, as I have always done. What have I on the earth to love but you? Forgive me!” And quickly contrite, she covers Mrs. Dormer's hand with kisses. “Tell me only what you wish, and I will try,

if I have sufficient strength, to obey. Oh, why cannot we be all in all to each other, as we used to be in the happy light-hearted years when I was a girl?"

"Before Roger Tryan came between us," exclaims Mrs. Dormer, adroitly introducing, in her emotion, a name she seldom has courage to mention in cold blood. "And sometimes you wonder that . . . in my poor mother's heart . . . I cherish so much bitterness against that man!"

The aim is clever; the mark overshot. Joyce is sensible of a recoil of feeling, a certain uncomfortable suspicion of stage effect. She rises promptly from her knees.

"I wonder at nothing, mamma. I know that vain regrets do not kill, that I may have to live another forty or fifty years, and to make the best of them: to wake and sleep and dine and dress, and be as other people. It seems a necessity that some man's peace shall

be risked by my marrying," she adds after a little pause. "Well, money can buy—not happiness, but the means of forgetting one is unhappy. If sacrifice there must be, as well select a rich victim, John Farintyre or another."

"Would not such things as these be better unsaid, Joyce?"

"I think not, mother. The time is coming on when I may have, perforce," once more a marble whiteness overcomes the youthful blood-hues of her cheeks, "to be dumb! Let us be sincere, now, accustom ourselves to look evil in the face, but never pretend we think evil good. You have been talking this evening with John Farintyre about a subject that he has not courage to broach to me himself. What is it?"

Mrs. Dormer's answer is given with infinite tact, with gentleness, with delicacy, with the lightest ornamental touch of tears: tears that might be compared to the *fioritura* of Italian

song, superadded notes, airily falling on the central melodic figure! But Joyce knows, were it only by the deadness of her own heart, that in that soft and flowery answer is couched an ultimatum.

“John Farintyre pleads but for one encouraging word,” remarks Mrs. Dormer suavely. “Every detail of his fate is to be left in your hands. You are both so young! An engagement of some months might be a really wise test of the fidelity of both. At the end of those months, we shall, I hope, be in Rome——”

“Having wintered at Nice on our road!” interrupts the girl, with meaning even Mrs. Dormer cannot disregard. “And near Nice lies Monte Carlo, and to the gambling-tables of Monte Carlo come visitors. As you have broken the ice yourself, mamma, you must not be angry with me for mentioning Roger Tryan’s name. Did you ever hear that he

arrived in Nice a very short time after you and I had left last winter?"

Joyce asks the question with an obvious effort. Turning her head aside, she makes a pretence of consulting the timepiece on a neighbouring mantelshelf.

"Last winter?—let me think! Yes, of course. Lady Joan Majendie did mention in one of her letters that Mr. Tryan, with his friends, the Pintos, was spending the spring in Nice. Very deplorable whispers, too," adds Mrs. Dormer, with soft asperity, "were current as to poor Mr. Tryan's card losses! As long as he did not gamble, one might trust—trust in his reformation! But as Lady Joan says——"

"Could a man not play, as girls occasionally go to balls and garden parties, out of sheer weariness of spirit?"

"I am no casuist, Joyce. I believe wrong to be wrong, and Roger Tryan *lost*."

Mrs. Dormer is in earnest. Her accents all but rise to tragedy.

"You class him with his associates, in short?"

"I desire to think neither of him nor of them. I do not see what connection persons like these can have with the subject of which we are speaking."

"Persons like these might chance to return to Nice another winter."

"And even if they did so? Surely, child, you would not wish me to change our plans because there is a remote prospect of coming across Mr. Roger Tryan and Mrs. Pinto?"

At this cruel, intentional juxtaposition of names, Joyce winces, like one in bodily pain.

"Not only would I keep to our plans, mother; if opportunity came, I would seek, once again in this mortal life, to meet and speak with Roger Tryan. Has he ever had an actual honest chance of righting himself

with me? That question forces itself upon my mind pretty often."

"When a man's conduct proves him faithless, one would be disposed to value his protestations lightly. You could scarcely wish to hear," says Mrs. Dormer, "that, next to the society of Major and Mrs. Pinto, and roulette, Roger Tryan still likes you best?"

Joyce Dormer raises her eyes, a look of piteous entreaty in their blue depths, to her mother's.

"No, mamma. It would be a kind of death to hear that! I have had experience. I know, too well, that there can be no second-best in love."

"And I may give, at least, a gleam of hope to John Farintyre?"

"Tell him to hope wisely. It is the friendliest word that can be spoken to him."

"I shall deliver the message intact, knowing well," cries Mrs. Dormer archly, "what

bright interpretation the poor fellow's heart will put upon it. You would feel happier yourself, Joyce, were the future more settled. We are to be in Rome by March. Let it be a fixed thing that the wedding shall take place after Easter."

"Or all thoughts of the wedding be finally and for ever given up. The conditions are just on both sides." These are Joyce's last words as the mother and daughter part for the night. "I shall be twenty-one in the fourth week of April, old enough, certainly, to know my own mind! And if I *can*—be sure you use the word, italicised, when you speak to Mr. Farintyre—if I *can*, I will say 'yes' to him."

She runs upstairs with a buoyancy that her mother, easily hopeful, is fain to take as an auspicious omen, the burthen of "*Carmen, mia Carmen adorata*," upon her lips. But deep on in the night, when the moon has sunk

chill behind the snow-tops of the Savoy mountains, when Mrs. Dormer, warm asleep, is dreaming the good dreams of a conscience and digestion at rest, Joyce, at her open window, keeps vigil, her heart in revolt, a passion of dumb longing on her face.

“When a man’s conduct has proved him faithless, one would be disposed to value his protestations lightly.”

No disputing the truth of copy-book aphorisms. And yet, if she might come across her old sweetheart’s path, hear Roger Tryan’s voice, feel his hand-clasp, it seems, in this hour, to Joyce Dormer’s illogical mind, that she could die content.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARLOTTE AND WERTHER.

DURING the next five days Hugh Longmore sees, hears, tastes, with quickened senses. Mountain and lake and sky look bluer to him, music sounds more musical, the thin Swiss wine served round at Monsieur Scherer's table is as nectar.

In these five days is compressed the greatest happiness of his life, a happiness so thorough, he tells himself, 'tis impossible he can be undergoing that series of morbid changes often philosophically watched by him in other men, and which are the sure forerunners of the great unhappiness, love ! The first sound that greets him in the morning is Joyce's violin practice,

his room, surely by providential arrangement, being in the same wing of the hotel as Mrs. Dormer's apartments. His first vision is of Joyce herself on the balcony, her blonde head shining in the eastern sun, as she spreads out a breakfast of crumbs for the sparrows—those delightful, familiar sparrows that are a speciality of Clarens. On such occasions, especially I fear if Mr. Farintyre be hovering nigh (black jealousy at his heart, a blacker pipe between his lips), she will throw down a passion-flower or rose, or sprig of jasmine to the young Oxonian; and when she does so, be assured that Longmore would change places with no crowned head in Europe! After this, the sparrows being dismissed, books and papers are brought out, and the ladies “study.”

Poring, or seeming to pore, over his Greek tragedy, in some shaded corner of the terrace, Longmore will catch an occasional tone of Miss Dormer's voice as she reads aloud from the

Fortnightly, or the *Nineteenth Century*, or an article in the *Times*, or the *Revue des deux Mondes*, or perhaps the *Lancet*. Who knows better than Mrs. Dormer the amount and scope of reading that a life of gracefully intellectual Nomadism demands? By-and-by, an early lunch over, comes the afternoon's excursion, to-day around the lake, to-morrow to Glion, the next to Geneva; excursions in which, by seeming hazard, always, young Hugh Longmore is asked to join. And then there are the evenings—moonlit, cloudless, suave—evenings, made odorous by flowers, poetised by music, lifted curiously beyond the level of the lad's hitherto prosaic English experience, by the society of the two fair women who have so suddenly held out to him the hand of fellowship.

In after times, it may well be that Longmore shall look back on Clarens with disrelish; shall remember the lake and its lateen sails, the terrace and its roses, the balcony and the

girlish head that used to lean across its balustrade, with disgust rather than tenderness. Once let next morning's headache set in, and few men recall the sparkling primeval gaiety engendered by hock or champagne with zest. But for these five days, in spite of common sense perpetually hinting to him that he is in a fool's paradise, in spite of Farintyre's uncongenial presence, in spite of the fact that Mrs. and Miss Dormer will start for Como next Saturday, young Hugh Longmore dreams out his dream, and is contented.

For five days; on the fifth, mainly through Miss Aurora Skelton's agency, comes the chill process of awakening, some four-and-twenty hours earlier than, in the natural course of events, it need have done.

Under the first smart of Longmore's defalcation, poor Aurora's policy resolved itself into one of compromise. She essayed the appeal, direct—in two flats. Would he not come

back to her, Douglas, Douglas? Aurora would ask, at the summit of her voice, whenever Douglas ventured within earshot of the crazy salon piano. Receiving no answer, she essayed rice-powdered cheeks, Aurora's nearest possible approach to sentimental pallor, essayed banter, pouting, coyness: all in vain. At length, guided, by the superior tact of Diana—if Pansy, oh, ye curates, have the virtue, and Aurora, oh, ye men of the world, the beauty, has not Diana, oh, ye seekers after culture, the intellect of the family?—guided and sustained by the superior wisdom of Diana, the younger Miss Skelton bethought herself of a new line of conduct: of Mr. John Farintyre, of reprisals. Abandoning guerilla warfare, she determined to carry the campaign straight into the very camp of the enemy. We shall see with what success.

“This long-talked-of expedition to Chillon

has not come off yet, it seems." Mr. Farintyre is the speaker, looking hot and uncomfortable, like a man at odds with his conscience. "And the moon is just at her full. Let us see! To-day is Friday. You threaten to start for the Italian lakes to-morrow's evening. Now, what decent excuse could be found—I'm sure I don't know how to invent one—for not going to Chillon to-night with all these ladies?"

"An excuse for not going to Chillon with ladies!" exclaims Joyce, looking round at him with an air of pleasant surprise. She is drinking afternoon tea with her mother and Farintyre on the terrace; young Longmore, by accident, absent. "Mother, is it possible that you have been planning moonlight boating parties without my consent? This sort of wild conduct must be looked to."

Redder and redder grows the guilty face of poor John Farintyre.

“It is a party got up, you see, by some of the other ladies in the hotel—not a boating party at all. An excursion steamer from Lausanne is to stop at the Clarens landing-place and take us on to Chillon. I spoke—or rather she spoke—I mean Longmore introduced me to—ah—um—to Miss Aurora Skelton, the second evening I was here, and——”

“And you have been improving the acquaintance ever since,” observed Joyce, in a voice, soft, unthreatening as the lake-breeze among the roses. “I believe I saw the lady talking to you, did I not, as you smoked your third pipe this morning? A lady with black eyes, damask cheeks, and a hearty laugh? Yes. And so, you and Miss Aurora Skelton are planning a moonlight expedition to Chillon for this evening?”

There is something in the rippling acquiescence of Joyce’s tone that Mrs. Dormer likes not.

“This evening will be our last in Clarens, Mr. Farintyre. I had intended to take a drive in the direction of Ouchy.”

“Mother,” cries Joyce decisively, “Chillon by moonlight is a thing to be done; Cook’s coupons include the steamer fare, and Murray, I forget the exact page, supplies the needful ‘Childe Harold.’ You have, of course, accepted Miss Aurora Skelton’s invitation, Mr. Farintyre?”

“The invitation was from Mrs. Skelton and Mrs. Colonel Scipio Leonidas Briggs—jolly little American woman, you know, with the eyes and the Spanish mantilla,” says Farintyre, looking more and more miserable. “They passed by the smoking-room window this morning, all of them together, and asked me. And the Skeltons’ brother has arrived, T. S. as they call him—an outrageous little cad he is, too—and Miss Aurora added, as there were ladies in my party——”

“In your party!”

The exclamation comes in staccatoed accents from Mrs. Dormer.

“Well, no, I don’t mean that; she said as I had arrived the same day with Mrs. and Miss Dormer, she—they—would be glad if—” a look in Joyce’s blue eyes causes the words to freeze on his lips—“if you would excuse the shortness of the notice, and join the expedition.”

“I think, mamma,” says the young girl, giving Mrs. Dormer a brief, suggestive glance, “that the answer would come more fittingly from you. These ladies, with whom Mr. Farintyre has A Smoking Acquaintance, are civil enough, through Mr. Farintyre, to invite us on board one of the Lausanne excursion steamers; shall we accept?”

“It is impossible that Mr. Farintyre can be in earnest,” says Mrs. Dormer, failing to see humour in the situation. “An overture

that one cannot call well-bred was made to him. His moral courage may have given way for the moment, but——”

“Mr. Farintyre is thoroughly in earnest—are you not, Mr. Farintyre? You have every intention of accompanying Miss Aurora Skelton and her friends to Chillon to-night?”

“I don’t see how a fellow could get out of such a thing,” answers John Farintyre sheepishly. “All very well to talk of ‘moral courage,’ sitting here, like this protected—I mean, of course, with you and Mrs. Dormer. A girl meets you on the staircase, out in the garden, at the door of the smoking-room. . . . Dash it all! A girl meets you *everywhere*, and puts the question to you plump. ‘Was I engaged for this evening, or was I not?’ Miss Skelton said!”

“And you answered truthfully, that you were not,” observes Joyce approvingly. “If any one, meeting me constantly, on stair-

cases, in gardens, at the doors of smoking-rooms, were to ask me plump, ‘ Was I engaged or was I not ?’ I should display just the same want of moral courage as you did, Mr. Farintyre. I should answer emphatically : Not.”

Dark gathers the cloud in a moment on John Farintyre’s low forehead.

His regard for Joyce Dormer is, doubtless, after a fashion sincere. Still, could one analyse this regard (in the promised moral laboratory of the future, say, that laboratory wherein the ultimate elements of human character shall be chemically tested), it would prove to be made up of somewhat doubtful ingredients. Joyce Dormer is fair, well-born, gifted. Joyce Dormer is also, or has the reputation of being, hard to win : and John Farintyre’s vanity is flattered by the vision of unsuccessful predecessors. But, in his heart of hearts, he is afraid of her, ever ready to misconstrue her

kindest smiles, to detect a latent irony in her sweetest speech.

A man in choosing a wife should seek to better his connection. A man who marries an actress loses caste for ever. These are the doctrines in which Farintyre's newly enriched, staunchly conservative parents have reared him, the doctrines upon which he is now dutifully acting. And yet—the thought crosses him a dozen times a day—if social prejudice were less rigid, if Rosie Lascelles were inside the pale of eligibility, how joyful might be his wooing of her, how smooth their married life!

For Rosie Lascelles of the Ambiguity, mentally and morally, is on his own level. And although some exceptional women may prefer the tiptoe attitude in love, men of the calibre of Mr. John Farintyre do not.

“There is no need for you to make these confessions, Miss Dormer. Your actions show,

plain enough, that you consider yourself a free agent."

"Free as air," responds Joyce gaily, "and with no prospect of becoming fettered. I wonder how you and I can console ourselves this evening, mamma, while all the world goes to Chillon? Mr. Longmore shall offer a suggestion."

The young Oxonian, his good-looking face glowing after an icy swim in the lake, makes his appearance at this critical moment; and Mrs. Dormer pours out a cup of tea for him with more cordiality than her wont.

A passionless observer of human character stands on somewhat the same vantage ground as the political leader of a minority. Both are vested with the sacred irresponsibility of Opposition. Mrs. Dormer is absolutely passionless. She watches the moral twists and turnings of her fellow-mortals with less emotion than many naturalists sustain as they watch the

movements of the creatures in an aquarium. Hence, probably, the soundness of her judgments. At the first signs of insurrection shown by Mr. John Farintyre, that young Cræsus must, she decides, be made to feel himself in the cold. She reads the weak, ungenerous temper far too accurately to try conciliation, as her own finer tact and culture might prompt her to do in the case of a differently moulded man.

John Farintyre must be made to feel himself in the cold. A cup of tea is poured out graciously for Hugh Longmore. Joyce, with an air of business, sets herself to the cutting of bread and butter. For afternoon tea in Monsieur Scherer's establishment is a reality, not a pretence.

"Are you not reminded of the great bread-and-butter scene in 'Werther'?" She smiles at Longmore with her eyes rather than her lips as she asks him this. "We have got the lake, the mountains, the bread and the butter."

“And certainly the Charlotte,” adds Longmore, overlooking Farintyre’s presence. “But where is Albert?”

The brow of the man of shares grows darker. He draws forth a tobacco pouch from his breast-pocket.

“You have an *intermittent* dislike, I know, Mrs. Dormer, for tobacco smoke.” Under the influence of jealous temper John Farintyre almost utters a sarcasm. “So I may as well take myself off. Miss Dormer and Mr. Longmore, evidently, have mutual acquaintance to talk over.”

“Mutual acquaintance!” cries Joyce, clapping her slender white hands. “Oh this is delightful! Mr. Farintyre, after all the culture of Eton and Oxford, do you not know who Charlotte and Albert are?”

“Of course I don’t, and I have no curiosity to,” says Farintyre, savagely ungrammatical. “All of us are free as air—you reminded me


of that just now—free, Miss Dormer, to make as many or as few new acquaintance as suits us.”

“But these are intimate friends, people we have known for years.”

Never has Longmore seen Joyce in a mood at once so dangerous and so tantalising. She turns her face, lit with archness that is more bewitching than a smile, full upon Farintyre.

“Charlotte and Albert are characters in a novel, sir! Göthe’s ‘Sorrows of Werther.’ *You never read it?*—never read the book that, a hundred years ago, set half the gilded youth in Europe thinking of suicide?”

If any man in real life ever made use of the expression written down in old-fashioned plays and romances as “Pshaw!” I should say it was John Farintyre at this moment. Turning upon his heel, he moves some paces away from the rest, and there stands, surveying the blue expanse of lake, with eyes that in reality



see only the mocking girlish face of Joyce Dormer, the compressed smile, that he, Farintyre, construes into one of irony, around the lips of Longmore.

“We are going to spend quite a lonely, forsaken evening, mamma and I,” remarks the voice that Mr. Farintyre loves and hates alternately. “There is some moonlight expedition, Mr. Longmore, got up by the ladies in this house, to which all the world is going—you, perhaps, among the rest?”

“I think not,” answers young Hugh Longmore. “Some one in the hotel was good enough to write me a note of invitation, but——”

“You found it possible to get out of the way of temptation?” interrupts Joyce. “Or had you actually moral courage enough to plead a previous engagement?”

“I refused, Miss Dormer, without excuse or extenuation. If the whole duty of man

requires one to visit Chillon by moonlight, at least let the visit be got through alone."

"Ah, this is disappointing to our hopes. If you had not used the word 'alone' we might have thrown ourselves on your compassion. My mother and I will be left to our own resources to-night—Mr. Farintyre, of course, going with the crowd! And so, as you are a good rower, I thought, perhaps, you would take us out, just far enough to get a distant view of Chillon from the lake. What do you say, mamma?"

To Joyce's surprise Mrs. Dormer is acquiescent; prognosticates neither sore throats, low fever, storms, brigands, nor Mrs. Grundy. And John Farintyre, anathematising woman's frailty in his soul, is forced to listen, with what grace he may, while the evening's programme is canvassed in detail. By-and-by comes a suggestion, originating obliquely from Joyce, that every one's "Byron" would be the

better for rubbing up. How if Mr. Longmore should read aloud the "Prisoner of Chillon"? There will be ample time for him to do so between this and dinner, while she and her mother work.

"Charming! I will run for the book at once," cries Mrs. Dormer, rising with youthful vivacity to her feet. John Farintyre, cynical and jealous, feels convinced that the scene has been rehearsed between Mrs. and Miss Dormer beforehand. The most innocent, unpremeditated word savours to his jaundiced moral perception of "tag." "Will you be idle or work your tapestry, dear child? Work your tapestry. Then I will bring it out for you with my own knitting, and the 'Prisoner.'"

And five minutes later Longmore is clearing his throat, looking red, and feeling about as happy as he felt on the first occasion when he stood in the presence of Oxford examiners, while his companions, cool, fresh, as the roses

that grow about their heads, are settling themselves to work.

If all the pretty things men of genius have written about women and needles could be collected on a page together, the picture of Mrs. and Miss Dormer at this moment would offer a fair apology for their extravagance. The elder lady's work is a stocking of softest pearl-gray silk, precisely at the stage of development—does it ever, I wonder, get beyond that stage?—when you may say, “there is a stocking,” yet when no vulgar anatomical suggestions distress the eye. Joyce, with a very bright needle, and a very long thread, stitches dreamily at a scroll of mediæval tapestry, worked and sold at South Kensington, with a minimum portion of grounding to be finished by the buyer—an enigmatic, low-toned mediæval scroll, in perfect artistic keeping with the sober-tinted dress on which it rests, and the fair and serious face that bends above it.

“My hair is grey, but not with years.”

So Longmore begins, with well-trained cadence, his voice sufficiently moved by boyish diffidence to give the reading enhanced interest. And the swallows circle low above the sultry lake, the boatmen's lateen sails droop motionless. Mr. John Farintyre, pipe in mouth, paces up and down a neighbouring path (the fall of his footstep furnishing no inappropriate refrain to the story of the poem), gloomily speculating as he walks.

Joyce Dormer has aroused his vanity rather than conquered his senses. The Rubens colouring, the ample outlines of a Rosie Lascelles, nay, even the coarser charms of an Aurora Skelton, are, in very truth, on a nearer level with his tastes than the blonde ethereal graces of the girl whose pleasure it has been, during the past three months, to enthrall and torture him alternately.

This side the altar, chances of failure still

giving ardour to pursuit, such capricious, bitter-sweet relationship as exists between them, may be tolerable. But afterwards? What kind of future lies stored up for him? What are his own personal chances of happiness? What companionship can he hope for in a wife whose heart died with the loss of her first lover—candidly did she confess that truth to him in the earliest hour, when he hinted to her of his own passion—a wife whose tastes are divided between music, which he honestly dislikes, and books, of which he never willingly reads a line?

“One event, at least, is certain,” decides Mr. Farintyre, barbarously cutting off a carnation head with the point of his cane, “departure from Clarens. The successes of this young puppy, Longmore of Corpus, draw to a close. Let him talk of Albert and Charlotte, read his Byron, go in for attitude, while he may.” The lad is lying outstretched, in

quiet, unconscious picturesqueness, upon the terrace at the ladies' feet. "It is his final score. Longmore of Corpus and Miss Dormer will have no more starlit walks, will spend no more long *intellectual* hours in each other's society, while they live."

In which prediction John Farintyre, as events turn out, proves singularly wrong.

Throughout the afternoon the air continues warm to oppressiveness. The sun sets above Ouchy in a bank of copper-coloured cloud. The wind sinks lower and lower. Monsieur Scherer, shaking his head as he taps the fast-falling barometer at the hall door, warns such of his guests as it may concern, of certainly-approaching storm from the Jura mountains. All the time, however, the lake lies tranquil; the sky, save on that western horizon, looks blue and settled. And so, when the Lausanne steamer is duly telegraphed at the appointed

hour, it comes to pass that Monsieur Scherer is pronounced a false prophet, and that the moon-worshippers, with Mrs. Skelton and her daughters as commanders-in-chief, get under way.

A quarter of an hour later Joyce Dormer and her mother are waiting on the little Clarens jetty while Longmore brings round his boat. The banks of western cloud have become more and more copper-coloured. The lake glows like one vast mirror of burnished steel. The stillness is a thing to be felt.

“We ought to have listened to our landlord,” remarks Mrs. Dormer, whose face has lost its smiles. “It might be amusing to tease poor John Farintyre by the threat of starting, but there is such a thing as carrying a practical joke too far. Our wisest course now is to turn back while we can. Madness to think of going on the water at such an hour, and with such a sky over our heads!” adds Mrs. Dormer with a shudder.

She possesses, I should say, as much stout

courage as any woman of her weight in Europe. Ask lawyers, with whom at odd times she has had to deal, ask creditors, ask society at large and her husband's family in committee, if little Mrs. Dormer cannot display nerve on occasion !

The wilder moods of nature interest her moderately. Storms, theories of storms, may have, like glaciers, to be studied for conversational purposes. But are not all such subjects better "got up" out of a science text-book than from experience ? Mrs. Dormer, in short, has not one poetic fibre belonging to her. In fairness, it may be added that, even on a lake, Mrs. Dormer is liable to sea-sickness.

"If this is madness, who would choose to be sane ?" exclaims Joyce. "The sky is simply glorious, mother, all the more so for its uncertain promise. Look at those black and amber streaks along Jura ! Look at the moon above those masses of dappled marble cloud,

at that solitary star shining over the Dent de Jaman! It is just the moment the German storm-song tells of—the moment when the Sturmgeist holds his breath before bursting his chains asunder.”

Even as Joyce speaks, a moan sweeps across the surface of the lake. The willows along a neighbouring embankment give a menacing shiver. There is a second's breathless silence; and then—a long low rattle of thunder reverberates from peak to peak, among the far-off mountains.

“Mr. Longmore, I make my appeal to you!” cries Mrs. Dormer, as Hugh Longmore pulls in sight, round the head, of the little landing-place. “In boating questions one really looks upon an Oxford or Cambridge man as *infallible*. Do you consider it perfectly safe for us to venture forth?”

“Perfectly safe!” interposes Joyce. “My dear mother, for what human undertaking that

is pleasant can perfect safety be guaranteed? We shall be in no greater danger than all the honest souls who have gone to Chillon before us in the steamer."

"It will be a long time yet before the storm bursts, if indeed it reaches this part of the lake at all," says Longmore evasively.

He has been holding a not too auspicious weather talk with the Clarens boatmen, has received more warnings as to weather signals, streams and currents, than his knowledge of patois Swiss French enables him practically to grasp.

"In any case we may pull far enough out to see Chillon." The postscript is added in obedience to some mute command on Joyce's face. "Even if the badness of the weather sends us back at once."

"And if the lake is safe for a steamer, with thirty chartered sentimentalists on board, it ought to be safe for a rowing-boat with three,"

persists the girl, with admirable feminine casuistry. "Our portmanteaus are packed. Stradiuarius is labelled 'Como.' If a catastrophe happens, we shall have the satisfaction of leaving our possessions in good order."

She steps lightly into the boat, then stretches back a hand to her mother's aid.

"I am suffering from vertigo; I cannot measure distance," hesitates Mrs. Dormer, looking more and more uncomfortable. "Morally, I am not a coward, as you know, Joyce, but to-night some bodily weakness must have overtaken me. I doubt if I could keep myself upright in the boat."

"Then remain contentedly on dry land, mother. Mr. Longmore and I will row out far enough to see—or to be able to say we have seen—Chillon by moonlight, alone."

And fate, not unkindly, often, in smoothing difficulties for the imprudent, gives an impetus in the direction where impetus is least required.

The boat's head touches the jetty, Joyce's hand is still outheld, when Madame Scherer, mère, and a brace of grandchildren, issue from a house not twenty paces distant. What can be simpler than for Mrs. Dormer to return to the hotel under their escort, leaving Joyce and Longmore, when they have had their glimpse of moonlit Chillon, to follow ?

“ If you would give a serious promise to take care of yourselves.” Promptly recovering from her vertigo, Mrs. Dormer skips, landward, joyfully. “ I really think I shall put myself under Grandmamma Scherer's wing. The babies walk slow — I daresay you will reach home before me. And Mr. Longmore, if he likes, can have some farewell music, while we pity the infatuated people exposed to the weather at Chillon. If you would give me a serious promise ? ”

“ We give you a faithful promise,” cries Joyce, as Longmore, nothing loth, pushes the

boat off from the jetty. "There shall be no thunderstorm on Lake Geneva to-night—if we can help it."

"And we will return *when* we have seen Chillon," says Hugh Longmore. "You know, of course, Miss Dormer," he adds, when two or three strokes have put a deep iron-blue gulf between themselves and the shore, "that it will take an hour's steady pulling before we come in sight of the castle? I feel it a matter of conscience to tell you."

"Conscience! I know that we inhabit the best of all possible worlds," answers Joyce Dormer, in her gayest voice. "I know that the lake is like crystal—pray admire these jeweller's shop similes—the sky like marble and sapphire. Let us enjoy ourselves while we can, Mr. Longmore. Conscience and thunderstorms will come upon us quickly enough, without our going one yard out of the way to meet them!"

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD BYRON'S ISLE.

FOR a time Miss Dormer's spirits continue higher than their wont. She jests, sings, draws her hand, with the physical momentary enjoyment of a child, through the ice-cold lake water; by-and-by she suggests so gravely that Longmore for a moment is deceived by her voice, that they shall land and look after the thirty steamboat sentimentalists when they reach Chillon.

"There can be no doubt poor Farintyre needs looking after," the lad answers, in the same tone. "I saw Miss Aurora Skelton pinning a flower in his buttonhole as they left the hotel. I saw, also, that the pair lingered long

in the rear of the rest. Farintyre is innocent of the world's ways. He will be getting into an entanglement before he knows what he is about."

"I do wish he would!" cries Joyce, clapping her wet hands gleefully. "It would be a situation, and that is just what we all need. This wandering hotel life is a flat affair, absolutely deficient in dramatic points. But I am afraid one cannot hope for anything so charming as that sensible John Farintyre should compromise himself. In the first place—time is too short; Mr. Farintyre leaves Clarens tomorrow. In the second—a man must have imagination to get into that kind of trouble. Now if it were . . . don't be offended with me, Mr. Longmore . . . if it were you!"

"You think I am more wanting in common sense than Farintyre?"

As Longmore asks this question, he rests idly on his scull, looking, with a pleasure he

does not seek to hide, at the girl's fair and sparkling face.

"I am afraid common sense is one of the subjects I am not at home in. The first evening I saw you on the terrace—how many days ago is that? What, can it be only five days since you taught me where to look for Arcturus on the mountains, yonder! That first evening I certainly thought you in danger. I credited you with an unsafe amount of imagination."

"That first evening—when I listened, not knowing your name, as you played Corelli's 'Nativity.' Afterwards, you gave me a lecture on old violins, do you recollect, Miss Dormer? We were interrupted just as you were beginning to tell me the history of your Stradiuarius."

Miss Dormer's jeweller's-shop simile holds good still. The lake is like crystal, the sky like marble and sapphire. But it would seem that to Miss Dormer, herself, this best of all possible worlds has of a sudden grown gray

and over-clouded. Youth, brightness, bloom, have died out from her face. Her lips have fallen into their most unsmiling expression. No sound is there for a minute's space, but the drip of Longmore's suspended sculls, and a vague inarticulate murmuring from the hither shore. Lake Lemman—the frail boat ever drifting farther away among its currents—lies darkly, unnaturally motionless.

“Stradiuarius came into my possession more than two years ago,” with a visible effort Joyce Dormer at last begins. “It was a birthday present, given to me on the day I was eighteen. I have already told you, Mr. Longmore, that at that time we had a friend . . . who would have done his best, I think, to obtain the planet Mars, had I cried for it, such a friend as people do not meet with twice in their life, let them be ever so lucky. Well, two or three weeks before my birthday, I was asked to choose a gift—one that should be costly, hard to come

by, and that I would prize irrespective of the giver, for its own sake. Diamonds and pearls and filigrees I would have none of. The worst people," observes the girl emphatically, "have some one virtue in their composition. I am not mercenary, in *little* things."

"In *little* things!" repeats Longmore, with a certain jar of feeling that he might find it hard to account for.

"In those days, at least, I was not mercenary. But I have lived a great deal since. I have had more than my share of experience. You must not run away with the idea that I am a simple kind of girl. I am a woman with a past. Well, I looked round the London shop-windows. I exercised my imagination; I appealed even to my mother. In vain: I was so rich in myself! The world, it seemed, held nothing that could add to my happiness."

Joyce Dormer's eyes are suffused, her face kindles with a passion of which, until to-

night, young Longmore had not believed it capable.

This story of Stradiuarius, told, with no audience save himself, and with the poetry of lake and mountain and coming storm as adjuncts, begins to affect him—vicariously, of course.

“At last I fell back on the dream of my whole life—a Cremona. After a fashion, I had played the violin from the time I was six years old. Here was something costly, with a vengeance, something hard to come by, and that I should dearly prize for its own sake. I made my choice, and on the morning of my eighteenth birthday the Stradiuarius you know, bought in Vienna at I dare not say what price, was put into my hands.”

“Your friend must have been a rich man,” says Longmore, narrowly watching Miss Dormer’s pure and limpid face. “One hears of these Cremona violins selling for five or six hundred guineas.”

"If Stradiuarius were worth a thousand guineas or a few shillings, it would be the same to me," cries Joyce. "I shall never part from my violin while I live . . . perhaps because I am parted for ever from the donor. Guineas! Why, one would no more reckon up the price of one's soul than think of the market value of Stradiuarius. 'Stained through and through,' as the *Autocrat* says, 'with the concentrated tones and sweetness of all the harmonies which have kindled and faded on its strings.'"

Her speech is modulated by rich and sorrowful feeling. Bending her head low, she gazes intently down into the transparent water. "A woman with a past." The moods, then, the gravity, the weariness of this girl of twenty are rooted in experience, of which she has had more than her share! . . . And the boat drifts on—on, into deadliest peril, for Longmore, absorbed wholly in his companion and in the


half-confidence she has made to him, rests inactive, still, upon his skulls.

Miss Dormer's voice recalls him with a start from speculation to reality.

"If nineteenth-century miracles were possible, I should say that a miracle was taking place now. You have not been rowing for the last ten minutes, Mr. Longmore, have you? Well, look behind: see the distance we have drifted. *What* is it that bears us away from the shore with such weird swiftness?"

It is the strong back current of the lake towards the Rhone valley—the current that has hurried so many victims to a blue and fathomless sleeping-place. In an instant young Longmore's hands grip tighter hold of the skulls; with very might he makes a few fruitless efforts at backing water, and then—the boatmen's warnings and the gravity of the situation burst upon him.

If the weather remain calm, as it has been



for days past, he knows the extent of the peril. Let the boat only float with the current as far as Villeneuve, and the worst will be over. A couple of hours' steady sculling close to shore will bring them back to Clarens. But the sky during the past quarter of an hour has turned black; the moon shines cold and wan from behind the mass of cloud that threatens instantly to overwhelm her; a tremulous, uneasy motion of the boat tells that storm is already agitating the western portion of the lake.

"Well," asks Joyce Dormer with tolerable self-command, "what is the meaning of it all? Do not be afraid to speak out. Why do we go at this extraordinary rate with no outward or visible means of locomotion? Why——"

A blaze of lightning irradiates mountain, villages, and lake with fierce effulgence. The question dies on Joyce's lips. Ere she can recover her breath comes such thunder as only the meeting of mountain clouds engender, and

mountain crags echo back. There is a lull, resembling in its sickening intensity some moment of keenest moral suspense . . . two or three seconds later the rain and wind in hurricanes are upon them! A rough tarpaulin has been left under a seat by one of the boatmen. This, with exceeding difficulty, Longmore draws around his companion's shoulders. And then, facing each other still—for Joyce holds mechanically to the rudder, he to his sculls—they crouch and await their fate.

The storm has burst so suddenly that neither of them, perhaps, at first can grasp the full awfulness of their position. Five minutes ago and they were gliding over a sea of glass, talking in soft whispers, transported into youth's fairyland of romance, sweet in its very bitterness. And now . . . No, the prospect of danger and death must be dwelt upon longer than *this* ere it can be realised!

“Poor little mother!” so Joyce exclaims at

last, with all the energy she can command. "Mr. Longmore, should you think the storm is as wild at Hôtel Scherer as here?"

But Longmore answers not, hears her not. The voice of a cannon were, indeed, scarce distinguishable amidst the tumult of sound, the Babel of every angry element at once, that rages around them. Their boat, a broad-built little lake craft, holds her own stoutly, but each surmounted wave, Hugh Longmore too truly knows, may be the last. Accident, a succession of accidents, have alone kept them, up to this, from shipwreck. And the storm has not reached its height, the lake has not risen to its full fury. Estimating roughly the length of time that has passed since they left Clarens, he judges that they must be about midway between the shores, cut off from all possibility of help. A lifeboat exists at Vevey, manned by a stalwart crew and a brave one. But Vevey is miles away. Mortal heart knows not of their danger,

and unless rescue come in the next quarter of an hour, they perish !

With the condensed retrospective memory of a man dying by violent death, young Longmore goes back over his twenty-two years of life. A thousand little incidents make his Winchester schooldays, his Oxford terms, appear before him in a flash. He looks forward to that final examination in jurisprudence (honours) which he will certainly *not* pass. He knows a brief, exceeding bitter pang, remembering the country parsonage that a short paragraph in the *Times* may render desolate. And then—he thinks only of his companion, the girl whom, after a week's acquaintance, he has come so near to loving, and to whom death, not life, shall unite him !

He bends forward, and during a moment's break in the tempest, speaks so that Miss Dormer can hear. Is she very cold ? very wet ? Is there anything he can do for her ?

In real life, even at its supremest moments, men's speech is so much tamer than their feelings, so seldom rises from the monosyllables of Saxon commonplace to the dignified periods of the drama !

"Do for me?" echoes Joyce, and, keenly listening for her reply, Longmore detects a sound like laughter beneath the tarpaulin. "Well, yes. Keep me from drowning, if you can." Then almost in the same breath, "Look ! there is the shore ; there are trees just ahead of us," she cries, in a voice wild and broken with excitement. "There !—in that last flash of lightning I saw the outlines plainly. Great heaven ! We are close upon it. We are lost !"

The boat, as she speaks, eddies round as a leaf might eddy in a whirlwind, under the influence of some new opposing force, then, with one wild shock, is flung broadside on upon *terra firma*. For a few seconds Joyce

Dormer loses consciousness—such, at least, in attempting to picture the scene afterwards, is the outcome of her confused recollection. With the dawn of returning sensation, she realises that she is on dry land: stunned, giddy, surrounded still by the spray of surging waves, but with a pair of strong arms holding her tight, with solid ground, not a frail and swaying plank beneath her feet.

“Where am I?” she utters faintly. “Are we on shore? Have we got safely back to Clarens?”

“We are on shore,” Longmore answers; “but, I am afraid, far enough away from Clarens! The boat ran aground for a few seconds,” he adds, still holding her closely to his side, “and by some desperate turn of luck we struggled, both of us, through the surf.”

“And we shall return to my mother the moment the storm lessens? Listen! The thunder is growing more distant, is it not?”

In another few minutes we will start—on foot, of course. We will not trust ourselves to the tender mercies of the lake again to-night.”

No reply is needed from Longmore. At this instant a flash of lightning, longer, more lurid than any of the preceding ones, gives the vividly significant answer of facts to Joyce's question.

The scene of their shipwreck is the little isle of Byron's prisoner, a small patch of lake-girt land immediately opposite the embouchure of the Rhone ; the little isle whose “three tall trees” are groaning, as if in agony, under the storm, and across whose narrow confines the surf and spray are dashing with dangerous strength.

Blacker than ever has grown the moonless sky, fiercer the wind. No friendly light from village or beacon-tower is to be descried along the dimly visible shore.

“I call this charming!” exclaims Joyce,

when two or three breathless minutes have gone by. "All my life I have been longing for one good, solid, genuine adventure. I have got my desire at last. So this is shipwreck!" Her teeth chatter with cold as she speaks. "Have not one's clothes a queer, heavy, Ancient Mariner sensation about them? We must be nearly wet through."

Nearly! They are as honestly drenched as though they had been to the bottom of the lake. In the struggle of making good their landing, the supreme struggle in which Longmore had to fight for two lives at once, the boatman's tarpaulin was carried, with the boat, away. Not an inch, not the possibility of an inch of shelter, is between them and the skies.

"If one had to brave it for half an hour, it would be nothing," says the lad miserably. "But we may have to pass hours here before we can be picked up. Miss Dormer, what

have I led you into ? How will you ever be able to pull through such a night as this ?”

“Don’t make the worst of things, Mr. Longmore,” is Joyce’s prompt answer. “One feels chiller than is comfortable, perhaps, and heavy. I can hardly bear my own weight. Otherwise there is not much to complain of. The lifeboat people at Vevey will hear from Monsieur Scherer that we are abroad. There is no fear as to our being found eventually.”

“If I could only shield you from the rain, meanwhile !”

He stands between her and the storm ; he takes off his jacket, fortunately of thick pilot cloth, and buttons it round her shoulders ; then strives to bring life into her death-cold hands by chafing them between his own.

And the fury of the night waxes fiercer, the lightning becomes incessant. A stifling sulphurous smell is in the air.

Of himself, stout English lad that he is,

young Longmore thinks nothing ; but Joyce—will the delicately nurtured, fragile girl ever live through the hours between this and dawn ? He stoops, afraid lest she be losing consciousness, and whispers—the first futile question that comes to his lips : What is she thinking of ?

“ I was thinking,” says Joyce in her quiet, cadenced voice, “ how opportune it was of Lord Byron to invent this island. But for the poet, Mr. Longmore, where would you and I be now ? ”

“ And you are not extremely wretched, not in actual suffering ? ” persists Longmore. “ I feel so horribly guilty of all this ! If you would only say ”—in spite of himself, a foolish, half-tender shyness infuses itself into his tone, “ that you forgive me ! ”

“ I have to thank you for the two best things I have got out of Switzerland,” says Joyce. “ First . . . incline your ear a little

closer . . . first, for our moonlight dingle, where the wild thyme grew, and now for our magnificent shipwreck. This is the very stuff inspiration is made of!" A crash of louder thunder rives the air as she speaks, followed after a second's pause by lightning, forked and sheet, intermingled in one wild blaze. "This makes one appreciate Wagner's Donner und Blitzen music, does it not—makes one think of Weber's great overture more respectfully! Listen to the moaning of the lake! Hear how the 'three trees' wail, as though they were sorry for our plight. Oh, this is grand! One knows now how Beethoven came to write the Prisoners' Chorus in 'Fidelio.'"

And in the intense electric whiteness of the moment Longmore sees her face distinctly. The sensitive, mobile features are aglow with feeling; warmth has returned to her cheeks; a fire of sweet, perfectly natural enthusiasm is in her blue eyes. At this moment Joyce

Dormer is an artist, filled with an artist's self-forgetfulness. She remembers neither her present companion, nor her absent suitor, no, nor the ever-present sense of lost happiness which, walking with her, hand-in-hand, is the shadow of her young life! Beethoven's giant outcry, that chorus in "Fidelio," into which the sufferings of our whole race seem crushed—she can hear the like of this in winds and waves and thunder; can feel, girl though she be, that an hour may come when she, in her weakness, shall, like the master in his strength, give adequate utterance to the pent-up emotion of years, and that the world shall say: This is Art!

But Hugh Longmore misjudges her.

Hugh Longmore, it may be urged in his justification, is twenty-two years of age, unversed in the world's ways, ignorant of the sharp, thin line that divides friendship from sentiment, and both from love. He sees the

warming cheek, the parted lips, the blue eyes sweetly fired! A wild, a desperate hope seizes his heart, and he whispers words that to this hour burn him with humiliation, even in the retrospect.

"I cannot hear a syllable," cries Joyce. Did ever man receive so sincere, so unconscious a rebuff! "Please let me answer when I have got my wits more about me." Of a truth, she is in a land far distant from this outward and visible one, is listening to messages too subtle even for lovers' language—messages that in her excited brain are forming themselves into wild, unearthly music. "Don't think me uncivil, Mr. Longmore . . . for the first time in my life, I feel original . . . I have got hold of a motif! Oh, if we had only put a pencil and a sheet of scored paper in our pockets!"

CHAPTER IX.

JOHN FARINTYRE RISES TO DIGNITY.

WHEN youth lingers, abnormally long, on the face of man or woman, you may theorise, pretty surely, as to the relative amount of feeling that accompanies it. Are not love and love's anxieties the tools that carve out hollows around too fond eyes, and delve unseemly parallels on cheeks and foreheads?

Little Mrs. Dormer at nine-and-thirty looks a girl. Without malice, it may be said that little Mrs. Dormer never makes more of trouble than is picturesquely needful, never, under any conditions, goes forth to meet the thing that is unpleasant on the road.

During her daughter's childish ailments—

and twice or thrice Joyce's small feet came near to entering the dark portals—Mrs. Dormer was ever ready, with or without a change of symptom, to accept such optimist hopes as doctors and nurses held forth to her. During the bitter love-sorrow of the girl's maturer years, Mrs. Dormer felt it a moral obligation to go to dinners and dances and operas ("Keep our places, in this all-forgetting London, open," she used to say, with a moistened eyelash), until such time as Joyce's stricken heart should win its way back to health.

She does not forsake her standard of duty to-night. Regrettable, doubtless, for convention's sake, that one of these mountain storms should burst at the time when Joyce, unchaperoned, had rowed a few hundred yards forth on the lake to see Chillon. But there is no cause whatever for grave anxiety—so Monsieur Scherer, smooth smiles around his Swiss lips,

and dire forebodings in his Swiss soul, assures her. The dread is, that Joyce may be delayed longer than John Farintyre, with whom it were unwise just now to risk serious misunderstanding. Social rupture, however, trivial or serious, was never mended by brooding over it beforehand. If reconciliation be needed when these hot-headed young people return, Mrs. Dormer, you may be sure, will come to the fore, with all the tact that knowledge of their weakness and of her own strength can engender. And in the meantime . . .

In the meantime, she draws the curtains of her salon, lights her reading lamp, arranges lamp and books cosily on a low table beside the sofa, and settles down to the latest positivist philosophy as set forth in the current number of the Bi-monthly !


So things go on, rose-coloured theories still tenable, for half an hour or more. Then the storm, that hitherto has swept obliquely over

Clarens, circles back round the eastern head of the lake, after the manner of Lake Lemman storms, with the strength of a cyclone. The lightnings blaze, until reading-lamps seem useless and positive philosophy dark ; thunder rolls ; winds roar ; slates fly. There comes a crash, a fall, and then a hurried cry that one of the hotel outbuildings has fallen. Finally, at the very zenith of confusion—waiters rushing this way and that, servant-women wringing their hands, small children and Swiss grand-mamas screaming on upstairs floors—in walk the storm-beaten sentimentalists, John Farintyre at their head, from Chillon. But no Hugh Longmore—waiting, by this time with a quickened pulse, on the stairs, Mrs. Dormer is forced to swallow the unwelcome truth—no Hugh Longmore ; no Joyce.

Mrs. Scipio Leonidas is in loud hysterics (a waxen-faced, Shelley-like partner, lost somewhere on the road). Her do the hall-porter's

strong arms bear, *nolens volens*, off the scene. The Skelton family is in worse plight still. The Skelton family, to use a phrase common in haberdashery, "does not wash." The Veteran's pencilled eyebrows have dissolved, gone from her lips is the summer bloom, the warranted smile gleams corpse-like. And her daughters? Ah! if the great Thoreau could see them! Her daughters' complexions are in a putty, their spirits at zero, their voices hollow. Has not Joyce Dormer's suitor been grim, absent, unsmiling, the one moral element needed to crown the general fiasco! Limp, draggled, discomfited, these ladies take refuge, with what speed they may, in the sanctuary of their own apartments, and upon Mr. John Farintyre devolves the telling of the tale.

Scarcely had the excursion steamer started, before the captain, tardily weatherwise, declared his intention of getting on to Villeneuve for the night. The party from Hôtel Scherer



were put ashore at Chillon with injunctions to return, as the nature of their tickets permitted them to do, by rail. But the last train to Lausanne had already passed ere they reached the station. Not a vehicle, in face of the coming storm, was to be hired. And the sentimentalists, unless they would spend the night at Chillon, had no choice but to make their way back through rain and tempest on foot, arriving in such sorry condition as we have seen.

“In short, you who stayed behind have had the best of it,” concludes Farintyre, turning morosely on Mrs. Dormer, who has met him at the entrance of the hall. “I can fancy how you and Miss Dormer, and *that young Longmore*, have been making merry at our expense.”

“I—I am looking for Joyce’s return at every minute.” Mrs. Dormer falters this, turning very white. “I had hoped to see Joyce come back with the rest, but——”

Further explanation is cut short by Monsieur Scherer, who comes up suavely, rubbing his hands, the professional Swiss smile round his mouth, and with a new source of hopeful consolation to offer to Mrs. Dormer.

Monsieur Scherer has this moment received a telegram from Vevey. Sympathising in the parental anxiety of Madame, he despatched a messenger thither more than an hour since, and learns that the lifeboat put forth at the first threatenings of storm. On such a night as this the lifeboat's crew will row straight away towards the embouchure of the Rhone, picking up, we may feel certain, whatever unwary strangers shall unfortunately be still upon the lake. Madame need be under no fear, with the Vevey lifeboat afloat (but Monsieur Scherer has children of his own : his thin lips falter as he speaks). With the lifeboat afloat there is not the smallest little doubt in the world about the safety of *cette chère Mademoiselle*

and of the young English gentleman who accompanied her.

“A lifeboat certainly does give one a sense of security,” observes Mrs. Dormer, raising her soft eyes, floating in tears, to John Farintyre. “Lifeboats are manned by such magnificent fellows always, are they not? And—and——”

She breaks off short, scared by a certain fixed look upon her prospective son-in-law’s face.

“Mr. Hugh Longmore, I assume, is the young English gentleman?” For once in his life, John Farintyre almost rises to dignity. “Cette chère Mademoiselle is not spending the night abroad without a companion?”

And Mrs. Dormer knows that her position is a critical one.

She is not cruelly perturbed about Joyce’s exposure to the storm, as a weaker or a stronger woman might well be. Why torture oneself with vain nervousness, when a landlord who understands the country, the climate, and the

Vevey lifeboat, gives a positive assurance that everything will come right in the end ?

But she is shaken to the inmost fibre of her being by this fixed expression, this index of resolution already formed, that she can decipher on Farintyre's face.

"I . . . am not strong enough for such anxiety. Joyce—my child—come back to me . . ."

Thus cries Mrs. Dormer, moved by an inspiration of that genius which is the most graceful substitute society offers for real feeling. Then, stretching forth a pair of white, appealing hands, she faints away with the loveliest decorum—with Monsieur, Madame, and Grand' Mère Scherer looking on, respectfully sympathetic—into John Farintyre's arms.

CHAPTER X.

ETHER.

AND so, when Joyce and Longmore do at length return, when—drenched hero and heroine of the hour—they have gone through an ovation from hosts, hall-porters, servants, guests, and find themselves outside the door of Mrs. Dormer's salon, it comes to pass that the fumes of ether greet them.

And Joyce's heart turns cold!

At many an important turning-point in her young life's journey, ether has been made to play a leading and successful part. Once, notably, on a breezy day, when her father—lawyers present—decided in black and white what settlement he should annually make upon

the wife from whom the exigencies of bronchitis and bric-à-brac divided him ; once again, years later, when the cruel letter was composed and despatched that broke for ever with Roger Tryan. With forebodings, all the keener, probably, by reason of her overwrought bodily state, the girl's heart informs her that ether will be successful now.

“It is best for us to say good-night, Mr. Longmore.” Pausing at the half-opened door, she gives the young Oxonian her frozen hand. “But for you I should be at the bottom of the lake. Well, if by to-morrow morning I find the taste of living sweet again, I shall be able to thank you more heartily. Now, I must think only of my mother.”

She walks into the salon, feverish, poor child, from exhaustion, her clothes dripping, her hair disordered, her blue eyes wild and pale, to find—this picture :

A reading-lamp, becomingly softened by a

porcelain shade; the current number of the Bi-monthly, turned face-downwards on a table; a white shawl; cushions; a pretty dimpled hand holding a morsel of cambric to a morsel of a nose and—ether! To these details, Mr. John Farintyre, pacing up and down the room with much the gait and amiability of a caged bear, forms an effective background.

A feeble: “Well, Joyce!” in the tone the girl knows too well, proceeds from Mrs. Dormer; and in a moment Joyce, on her knees, is at her mother’s side.

“Mamma, poor dear mamma.” She covers Mrs. Dormer’s warm little hand with repentant kisses. “I am more sorry than I can say to have caused you such anxiety. Oh, mother, you must indeed have gone through a terrible time.”

Mrs. Dormer, it would seem, does not notice her daughter’s pallor, the weariness of her eyes, the cold and stiffened condition of

her drenched garments. Mrs. Dormer lays a hand on the approximate region of her own heart. In an almost inaudible voice she murmurs a word or two about "palpitations." She gives a glance at the dark, bear-like figure of John Farintyre.

"Another escapade like this will be the death of me. You know, Joyce, every one knows, how feeble the action of my heart is ; how all the doctors have bidden me avoid strong emotion as I would avoid poison."

Never surely was patient more obedient to physician's orders !

"Escapade . . . is this my welcome ?" cries Joyce, and shrinking away, she rises instantly to her feet. Alas ! the moment's keen disappointment is no new experience for her. Since she was four years old, it has been a familiar one whenever she has most lavished generous love, or generous confidence, on Mrs. Dormer. "I started with Mr. Longmore, as

'you know, mamma, almost by your own proposal, to get a moonlight view of Chillon. The storm came on too suddenly for us to return to shore, and but for Mr. Longmore's skill and courage, we must have been lost. An escapade! You do not think I have stayed out on such a night, in such a condition as this," extending an arm from which the water literally streams, "for pleasure?"

"And where, may I ask, Miss Dormer, were you and the courageous Longmore lucky enough to find shelter?" exclaims Farintyre, brusquely pausing in his walk. "No business of mine to inquire, you will say, perhaps. I think it is my business, for another half-hour at all events, to inquire into everything that concerns Miss Joyce Dormer's good name."

For a second or two Joyce looks at him as though the meaning of his speech failed to reach her. Then she turns indignantly away.

Crimson flows the blood over her wan-sunken cheeks.

“Mother, am I forced to listen to such a reproach as this? I went out on the lake by your approval, and in excellent charge. Our boat drifted into one of the back currents of the Rhone before we knew our danger, and then the storm burst, suddenly, and but for a miracle, we must have been lost——”

“A miracle, or Mr. Hugh Longmore?” Farintyre interposes the question, not too graciously.

“You know Lord Byron’s Island, opposite Villeneuve, mamma? On that tiny speck of ground, thanks to Mr. Longmore’s gallant courage, we made good our landing. There we remained, our boat gone, without shelter, numbed, drenched, until those fine lifeboat men—yes,” with a look of fierce disgust at John Farintyre, with an involuntary clenching of her cold hand, “*men* as gentle as they were

brave, saved us . . . straight, it seems to me now, out of the jaws of death. And then, coming home to you, mother, rescued, one hears such paltry talk as this of 'good name!' Oh, if you loved me, sir," and she turns again towards Farintyre, a glow of eloquent anger on her young face, "if you loved me—and I know what I say, I know what love is—you would be so glad to see me safe; there would be no room in your mind for paltrier feeling."

A lover standing on Joyce Dormer's level, mentally, would, I think, make answer by taking her, faults and all, to his heart. For he would understand her. John Farintyre—no exceptionally black Othello, but commonplace, through and through—John Farintyre feels himself at once injured and unmoved.

"Tall talk is above my head. Never was good at acting—private theatricals and charades, and—and that sort of thing. And you *are*. Oh, it's no good smoothing matters over,

Mrs. Dormer." For here poor Mrs. Dormer struggles to edge in a conciliatory word. "I can't hold a candle to Miss Dormer in the way of cleverness, leave that to more fortunate men than myself! But I have my notions of what is, and what is not the correct thing for a girl to do. And I believe I have the honour of looking forward, some day, to becoming Miss Dormer's husband. And, by George!" he goes on, gradually lashing himself to fury with his own powers of invective, "I'll stand no more of this sort of work, engaged or married. You can break the whole thing off, or not, just as you choose. But if you keep to me at all, you shall obey me. You hear, obey!"

And with a couple of strides, Mr. Farintyre has crossed the room; the murderous, crushing grasp of his heavy fingers encircles Joyce's wrist.

And now, if never in her life before, does

Mrs. Dormer practically show how great a rôle ether can be made to fill in the drama of human lives.

Contempt, disgust, righteous indignation, are struggling for mastery on Joyce's face; mistrust, that it needs but a breath to kindle into open revolt, is on the face of John Farintyre. Another half minute and words beyond all recall would probably part these two ill-suited people for ever, did not little Mrs. Dormer rise mistress of the situation.

"My heart!" she moans, stretching out her hand to the ether bottle, which in her agitation, or her agony, she oversets. "I—I feel this painful excitement is too much for me. Mr. Farintyre—pardon . . ."

And then, for the second time on this miserably fateful evening, she loses consciousness.

One does not care to dwell over-much on the scene that follows. It is long ere Mrs.

Dormer recovers from her state of fainting—I feel in doubt as to the fittest spelling of this word! When, at length, she speaks again, Joyce, partly influenced by the fumes of ether, partly by sheer bodily weariness, has reached a helpless shivering condition in which she would probably answer “yes,” were the suggestion made of leading her to instant execution.

“The mischief arose from want of thought. My darling girl has caused me this wretchedness unintentionally,” murmurs Mrs. Dormer, taking up the thread of her ideas with singular clearness for one newly returned out of the dark know-nothing world of syncope. “And you, dear Mr. Farintyre, will forgive, will you not, as all of us must hope to be forgiven?”

“If Joyce chooses to shake hands over it all, things may go on smoother for the future than they have ever done.” Farintyre’s tone

is that of a man who recognises the generosity of his own conduct. "I don't think I stipulate for anything extraordinary," he adds, with a tentative side glance at Joyce's face. "Let the engagement be called an engagement. Let a fellow know what ground he stands upon . . . feel a little sure——"

"You hear, Joyce," interrupts the fainting woman, raising herself briskly, and fixing a pair of expressive eyes on her daughter's face. "Mr. Farintyre asks only for the security to which he is entitled. Make me happy, child, after all I have been called upon to suffer this night. Give him your hand."

Joyce Dormer stands mute, irresolute, sick at heart.

"If the thing *is* to be, I suppose one may as well cry Kismet!" So, at last, she answers, with a kind of forced spirits, with pale and quivering lips. "But I cannot admit, mamma, of that word security. There shall be a loop-

hole left. The engagement, as Mr. Farintyre wishes it, can be called an engagement—that is all. If either of us see fit to change between this and Easter it shall not be counted as falsehood. We are free, still.”

John Farintyre, it would seem, is satisfied. He takes possession of Joyce’s hand—she has not the strength, physical or moral, to withdraw it! Then, emboldened by this negative consent, he draws her to him, and officially, here in her mother’s presence, touches her cheek with his lips.

Joyce Dormer feels that she will never get over the shame of that first, bartered, loveless kiss while she lives.

CHAPTER XI.

CATS AND RED CLOVER.

BUT human souls, alas! the pity of it, do perforce get over everything. Our troubles kill themselves, if they fail of killing us; and the Registrar-General does not even make a return respecting the number of men and women who, in this nineteenth century, die in England from moral causes. With the definite prospect before her of becoming John Farintyre's wife next Easter, Joyce Dormer must rise, go to rest, eat her meals, adjust a becoming fold, a soft-tinted knot of ribbon before her looking-glass, just as in the happy days when she had promised herself, with all her faults, and all her virtues, to the man she passionately loved.

During two short days—days, who shall say of what secret, what wild rebellion—she keeps her room.

“My dear Joyce is sleeping off the effects of storm and shipwreck,” her mother whispers, towards the close of Saturday to Hugh Longmore. Mrs. Dormer has had the thoughtfulness to send for the young Oxonian—just to give him a hand-pressure, to bless him, dewy thankfulness in her soft gray eyes, for his *noble, heroic* conduct of the previous night. “I am not a friend in general to crystallised hell.” Mrs. Dormer slides with grace over the monosyllable. “After such a fright, such a wetting, however, one felt that four-and-twenty hours’ sleep would be priceless, and Joyce was persuaded to take a small half-teaspoonful of Hunter’s syrup. We have put off our departure until Monday morning,” adds Mrs. Dormer cheerfully, “so my daughter will have ample time to say all the pretty things the situa-

tion requires with her own lips to Mr. Longmore."

And, early on the morning of Monday, Longmore receives a little three - cornered pencil-written note—it seems to his imagination with some faint odour of wild thyme clinging around its folds—from Miss Dormer.

He has, I need scarcely say, indulged in pretty frequent speculations on a certain interesting "problem" during the fifty-six hours since the shipwreck; the nett result of such speculations being that he, Hugh Longmore, has tumbled, headlong and hopelessly, into love. Wisdom recommends an alibi: "Get clear of Clarens," says the monitress, "flee from the blue eyes that have so effectually put common sense and peace of mind to flight." And he has already determined to be wise, has looked up hours of departure in the train-bills, has commenced a rough and desultory packing of his Gladstone, when that three-cornered

note, with its imaginary odour of wild thyme, is handed to him.

“DEAR MR. LONGMORE—We are to leave for Italy this morning. Mamma and I hope you will drink five o’clock tea with us for the last time. If you would like some music, come round to our salon in the afternoon. Would three be too early ? JOYCE.”

It is a fine occasion for a man to display the philosophy that is in him.

Wisdom, looking back upon Lord Byron’s Isle, and upon words uttered there in a moment of madness, recommends an alibi.

Joyce Dormer invites to five o’clock tea.

Young Hugh Longmore unpacks his boots and hairbrushes, and, exactly as the Clarens clocks strike three, walks along the corridor, his heart most unphilosophically beating, that leads to Mrs. Dormer’s salon.

He finds Joyce alone at the piano, a com-

plicated score before her, which she is very evidently not studying. Her face looks pale and aged. As she rises, on Longmore's entrance, her eyes meet his somewhat less frankly than their wont.

"You deserve all sorts of pretty speeches, Mr. Longmore." So she remarks, after the first stereotyped anxieties have been uttered and set at rest. Some day, if I find that being alive is really sweet again, I will make them to you in a letter. My mother declares that if she had been rescued from destruction, she would write a whole book of sonnets and dedicate it to her preserver. But poor mamma thinks life so enjoyable! She credits all us worn-out people of a younger generation with having the same relish for it as herself. You have come early for some music, have you not?"

Longmore has come early—that he may be as long as possible in Joyce Dormer's society. Sensible of this fact he gives his answer with-

out hesitation. Yes. He has come early—for music.

“You said once you would like to hear some of my poor compositions.” Crossing to a table, Joyce takes out her Stradiuarius from its case. “As mamma is still busy, packing, I will play you two little songs for the violin that I wrote long ago. The first is called, ‘In the Campagna.’ You must suppose it to be a morning of Roman spring.” Her face begins to colour as she softly coaxes her instrument into tune. “The asphodel bloom is white, the myrtle in fresh foliage, the air full of violets. And a pair of foolish human beings are thinking, with beating hearts, that all the rest of life will be as happy as to-day. You understand?”

“Too well, I’m afraid, Miss Dormer.”

Philosophic though he be, Hugh Longmore’s answer is given with a marked strain of tenderness in his tone.

“I don’t know that music can really represent sunshine, and violets, and foolish human dreams, as some fanatics of the Schumann school declare. Anyhow, you know how I wish my poor little attempt to be interpreted. I am like Mark Twain’s artist,” adds the girl, her heaviness, it seems to Longmore, attempting to find relief in raillery. “‘It is useless to disguise the fact from you any longer,’ he tells the showman. ‘These rocks in the foreground *air* horses.’ Well, these sounds I am going to draw from my violin strings *air* asphodel blooms, blue sky, and marble ruins—with a pair of exceedingly foolish young people dreaming in their midst. Wait a second or two, until I have resined my bow, and you shall hear.”

“In the Campagna” is one of those simple Songs without Words, to which every kindred listener can supply the text in his own soul ; a song of such human happiness as is born of

young blood and warm skies, flowing without effort, to pure and ringing harmony.

As Longmore listens, as he watches the sweet unstudied attitude, the hands, the lips of the girlish composer, he bethinks him, with a pang, of what, after a seven days' dream, the years are likely to be, without Joyce Dormer ! How shall he, once having drank of this divinest madness, turn back to common existence, common law ? How take interest in Blackstone and Markby, in the litigations, over wills or marriage settlements of Brown, Jones, and Robinson, while the one woman who could have turned life's flat prose to poetry, walks apart from him upon the face of the earth ; likelier than not, as the wife of Mr. John Farintyre !

"It is full of faults, as a composition," cries Joyce, when he has stumbled, with British awkwardness, through a few stiff praises. "My life has not been ruled by my own

ambitions, or I should have gone, when I was fifteen, to the Leipsic conservatorium to make music my study. As it is, I shall only be an amateur, with a pretty taste, and tolerably dexterous fingers, to the last."

"If the world contained a few more such amateurs, Miss Dormer!"

"Mr. Longmore, you are trying to be complimentary. As a punishment, I shall play you my second song. I called the first, 'In the Campagna,' thinking of Browning's 'Love among the Ruins.' I call this, 'When Summer Dies,' from Keats's line in 'Endymion.' Our pair of foolish lovers, you must imagine, are beginning to discern that April-time and wind-blown asphodels and violet scents do not last for ever."

And speaking thus she plays again—a cantata with a wider sweep of meaning than the first, with a subtle wail of pain underlying the surface joyousness of the centric melody.

Hugh Longmore asks himself, with an

absurdly keen twinge of jealousy, if experience so rich in passion can have been drawn actually from the girl's own life? Is the song inspired by a woman's remembrance or by an artist's prophecy?

Joyce Dormer seems to guess his thoughts.

"My compositions have the trick of emotion about them, have they not?" As she makes this somewhat cynical remark she lays down her Stradiuarius, fondly, gently, as though some invisible, vanished hand received it from her own. "But I am afraid the trick is artificial, a thing one has learnt, together with one's fugue and counterpoint, at so much an hour, from some German music-master. Shall I do better, I wonder, in the future? As we shivered under Lord Byron's three tall trees the other night, I told you that I had found a motif. It has seemed to me since that a picture of absolute loss and ruin, the shipwreck of the two foolish lives that set out amidst

April sunshine and violet scents, would fitly end my trio of songs."

"The falsest art in the world, my dear! Never end anything with a shock!" Mrs. Dormer, who has quietly entered, offers this advice. "An episode in minor occurs in most lives. Music should render it as an episode only. Shipwreck, absolute loss, whatever girls and boys may think at twenty, are of their nature inartistic. As much thunder and lightning as you choose early in your work. Leave your hearers when you finish in a state of calm repose. People who commit irretrievable fiascos are only in their place on the boards of a transpontine theatre. Mr. Longmore, how do you do? Quite sad to think how soon we must say good-bye? And you would like—Joyce, darling, where is your violin?—Mr. Longmore, no doubt, would like to hear you play for the last time in Hôtel Scherer."


They play to him for nearly an hour, bright

and airy music, selected, doubtless, by Mrs. Dormer on artistic principle, the principle of making final impressions cheerful ones. But Joyce's heart is not in her fingers this afternoon. It would seem that her eyes read other notes than those written on the score. The performance is spiritless. At five o'clock a waiter enters with tea, and Mrs. Dormer shuts the piano a little abruptly.

"We never played so badly in our lives. I forbid Mr. Longmore to applaud. Where are your thoughts, my dear Joyce? In our half-packed portmanteaus or——"

"My thoughts are with the people who commit irretrievable fiascos," answers Joyce. "I was thinking neither of Gounod nor Berlioz, but of the episode in a minor key that has yet to be written; the episode that shall have for its title 'Shipwreck.'"

Mrs. Dormer seats herself at the tea-table and begins talking about nothing with a per-



sistent vivacity that disperses sentiment by force. Sad to leave this fresh, blue Switzerland behind, yet charming—if friends could only accompany one—to think that another twenty-four hours will see them in the land of Fata Morgana—on the south side of the Alps. People go on existing in all the other countries of Europe. In Italy *one lives!*

It is the kind of commonplace that carries with it a superficial ring of sincerity. But it is only a commonplace. Who should know better than Mrs. Dormer that a pretty, agreeable little woman may “go on existing,” quite as enjoyably in London or Paris as elsewhere?

“And you, Mr. Longmore, is there no remote chance of our seeing you in the South? We shall spend the remainder of the autumn at the Italian lakes; during winter we shall be in Nice. Those tyrannical doctors insist upon my breathing the air of the French Riviera until spring breaks.” (And the

gaieties of the Nice season decline!) "Easter will find us, as it finds most other vagabond English people, in Rome. Joyce, my love," and Mrs. Dormer says this with intentional meaning, "we should be very pleased should we not, if Mr. Longmore chanced to be in Rome next Easter?"

Joyce is standing beside the window, her violin still between her hands, her whole attitude one of nerveless dejection. At the mention of her own name she starts round; then busies herself in packing away her Stradiuarius in its case.

"I—I was speaking of Italy," Mrs. Dormer repeats, discreetly leaving the question of next Easter alone. "And do you know, my child, if we mean to start upon our journey to-night we have not very much time to lose. Madame Scherer says we ought to leave this house punctually at seven. What can John Farintyre be about?"

“John Farintyre is on the terrace, mother,” cries Joyce, with an air of mock alarm, “and I don’t like the look of things. I hope nothing is about to happen to any of us, but these uncanny manifestations frighten me.” Longmore cannot but think that the girl when she speaks thus is putting a force upon herself. The effort, if it be one, is, however, successful. To any but a solver of problems, the artificial tone of banter might pass for flow of spirits. “John Farintyre has got a book in his hands. And that book is neither a yellow-backed novel nor a ‘Cavendish.’”

“Mr. Farintyre has a strong natural taste for reading,” observes Mrs. Dormer suavely. “A taste rather undeveloped perhaps at present, but quite certain to show itself in the future. I lent him a volume of Darwin this morning, and he is simply wrapped up—lost in it! I am convinced John Farintyre would take the keenest interest in works of scientific

research if he only allowed himself more time for study."

And when young Croesus comes sauntering in, some minutes later, book in hand, with countenance more hopelessly void of mind than usual, she, forthwith, begins to chatter Darwinism and Huxleyiana for his benefit.

Full of tact, of cleverness, up to a certain level, there is one matter in which Mrs. Dormer is prone to err. She overrates the power possessed by Mrs. Dormer of moulding men to her wishes.

The great barrier, she honestly believes, between Joyce and Farintyre is an intellectual one. Then John Farintyre's intellect must be cultivated. What, on the surface, can be easier? Make him skim over some nice popular little text-books of science, imbue him with the last subversive ideas in history, put a volume or two of erotic, mystic verse into his hands, and spice the whole with some well-

translated German rationalism. To this, in due course, must be added the proper amount of feminine coaching: the coaching that teaches you how to find staple for conversation out of the slightest materials; to recognise the subjects on which you may safely assume the responsibility of an opinion; above all, to know when to be silent.

If Mrs. Dormer could inspire an ignorant man with *that* knowledge, she would have cause to be proud, indeed, of her own powers!

“The chapter I marked for you is deliciously suggestive, is it not? Mr. Longmore, I am sure, will remember it — the chapter in which Darwin gives instances of plants and animals, remote in the scale of nature, who are yet bound together by a web of complex relations?”

“I am afraid the subject is out of my depth,” says Hugh Longmore, with the repug-

nance sensible men feel to scientific prattle at the tea-table.

“It may be deep for you,” cries Farintyre aggressively. “To me the whole thing seems as plain as a pike-staff, if once you accept Darwin’s facts. Of course,” he goes on with the solemn complacency of dulness, “one must start from some kind of premisses, take something for granted. I do accept Darwin’s premisses. I believe in primitive germs. I am an out-and-out . . . what the doose is the term? An out-and-out——”

“Evolutionist, perhaps.”

As Joyce makes the suggestion, she bends her head down over her plate, and Longmore notices that her colour deepens.

She is beginning, already, to blush for Mr. John Farintyre.

“Now, there’s the cats and the red clover. You couldn’t have a better proof of interdependence than that. Ordinary people, you

know, Longmore, would not see any connection between the two. But the man of science can tell you better. There could never be much red clover about in a district where there were no cats."

"Indeed! How does the man of science make that out?" Hugh Longmore asks innocently. "I am one of the ordinary people—are not you, Miss Dormer?"

"An ordinary person, waiting for enlightenment," says Joyce, looking pained. "Mother, suppose you tell us more about these wonderful cats."

But Mr. John Farintyre does not mean to have his story taken from him.

"The fact is, don't you know, it's all because of the humble-bees. Clover won't fertilise in any quantity in a district without humble-bees."

And Mr. John Farintyre helps himself, with an air of conviction, to bread-and-butter.

"Really? As you come fresh from the fountain-head, we must accept the facts," remarks Longmore. "But we have a right to ask that facts shall be explained. You can never have red clover in a district where there are no cats, because humble-bees are necessary for its fertilisation! I am more out of my depth than ever."

"I—I'm quite positive I'm right," says Farintyre, growing hot and confused. "Where's the good of turning everything into an argument? The humble-bees determine the quantity of the red clover, and the cats . . . doose take it, man! You can't expect me to have it all, chapter and verse—the cats, of course, determine the quantity of the humble-bees."

"Don't you think we have omitted one important factor—the field-mice?" asks little Mrs. Dormer.

Longmore looks across at Joyce. Her

eyes are downcast, her delicate face is suffused from brow to chin. And he knows, as plainly as though the communication had been made to him in words, that John Farintyre is Miss Dormer's promised husband.

CHAPTER XII.

INTELLECTUAL COQUETRY.

"I CAN tell you one thing, my dear Rora," and Mr. Thomas Skelton, as he speaks, arranges his polished, pointed boots in an attitude of graceful ease above the level of his head. "Neither of the three Miss Skeltons is looking younger. For Pansy there never was much hope. Our fond mamma destined her from her infancy for the Church, but churchmen, as far as I can see, look upon thick ankles and solid waists much in the same light as the rest of us. Diana might have done better; she was not a style I admire myself," says Mr. Skelton with an air of connoisseurship. "Wiry, light-fleshed, plainish head, and a

good deal more than enough of bone! Still, among the small Eastern Counties' squireens, Diana's were a style of looks that might have passed for breeding, if you had all had the sense to keep in England. Her day is over now."

"This brings it to me," observes Aurora blankly. "I suppose, T. S., you will be saying next that I am an old maid?"

T. S. glances round, languidly critical, at his younger sister's too rubicund charms.

Aurora is dressed, as usual, like a caricature of some other caricature. Three rows of mock pearls are arranged, Grecian fashion, round her head. She wears a peacock-hued pinafore with the singularly inappropriate motto, *l'homme propose*, worked in old English characters around the hem; bangles are about her wrists; beads about her throat; glaring knots of poppy-coloured ribbon seem to have descended upon her whole person in a shower.

“You are not an old maid *yet*, my dear, but your state is cachectic—highly! You know Punch’s advice to unmarried persons, as a body? My advice to the three Miss Skeltons is: whatever the suitor, and whatever his fortune: Do.”

Mr. Thomas Skelton is a cadaverous, rather elderly young gentleman, holding the rank of lieutenant in one of Her Majesty’s foot regiments; a young gentleman be-ringed up to the knuckles, redolent of pretension, Ess bouquet, and tobacco smoke, and who glories in knowing his own small world in particular, and human nature in the aggregate, on the very seamiest side. Not to be done at cards, or about a horse, or a billiard match, is T. S.; not to be deluded into believing in the honesty of man, far less of woman! In his mysterious theatrical information, his familiar stories of Lord A. or Viscount B., and his straight tips for the big races, Thomas Skelton is equally

reliable. Sometimes he is amusing ; especially when in an ultra-boasting vein, or delivering scraps of what one may call curaçoa-and-seltzer philosophy at second-hand. Such men in his regiment as possess money or titles, know him—to their cost. So, according to the Skelton family legends, do the higher circles of London society.

Into these higher London circles we may not aspire to penetrate. A solitary illustration of Mr. Thomas Skelton's family relations bears so closely upon the history of other personages in this little drama that it must, with a somewhat reluctant hand, be portrayed.

“Very easy for you to say : Do ! No girls ever had such a poor chance as us.” Aurora's English grammar is not perhaps up to the level of her other accomplishments. “Living about in invalid places where not a man you meet has got an inch of lung left, never going to any parties but those wretched pension

dances, and obliged to hesitate over every penny we spend in dress !”

Aurora glances ruefully at the actual, not over-fresh, condition of her poppy-coloured ribbons.

“I must confess you are rather heavily weighted,” says T. S., turning over a foot, in order that he may feast his eyes, as he discourses, on the faultless perfection of its boot and gaiter. “In the first place—well, ‘Handsome is as handsome does,’ the proverb says, but, as regards marriageable girls, the proverb says bosh. No one at the present age of the world cares a fig about a girl’s doings, so long as she handsome is. And the three Miss Skeltons are not handsome. In the second place there is the mamma.”

Alas, for the man, said Jean Paul Richter, who has not learned, in reverencing his own mother to reverence all womankind !

“Men, you see, have a trick of looking at

a girl's mater, and thinking what the girl, herself, is likely to become. And men—you ought to learn this, all of you, from the mamma, downwards—you ought to work it in golden letters round these ridiculous pinafores, men abhor electro-plate."

"Electro-plate! I declare, T. S., you get more rude in your manners every time you come to see us."

"Perhaps," says T. S. coolly, "I see more, every time, to make me rude. I have a vested interest, remember, in my sisters marrying or not marrying. Each year you go on like this, wandering from the Riviera to Switzerland, and back again from Switzerland to the Riviera, you spend more capital. Each year the prospects of my own final smash grow more distinct——"

"T. S.! For gracious' sake, take care you are not overheard!"

The brother and sister are exchanging these

affecting confidences while Thomas Skelton smokes his after-dinner pipe on the Hôtel Scherer terrace; and Aurora glances round, with alarm, in the direction of the salon windows.

“I don’t mean to say that anything could stave the smash off, now,” proceeds Mr. Skelton, in a lower voice. “Unless I can marry an old woman with the ready, another six months will see the end of it.” And this candid young gentleman thrums a tune upon the arm of his chair with the fingers of his cadaverous, prematurely nerveless hand. “If my sisters had found husbands in their youth and—well, if anything *had* happened to the mamma, and she had only cut up decently, I might have gone to the dogs at a less rapid pace than I am doing now.”

There is a minute or two of silence after this. Then, “If a girl happens to be the fashion, men follow each other, like a flock of

sheep, in their admiration of her," cries Aurora tearfully. "We see that in the case of this weak, foolish young Longmore I have been telling you about. Now honestly, T. S., forgetting that I am your sister, do you not think I have as much pretension to beauty as Joyce Dormer?"

Mr. Thomas Skelton turns his head with the natural indifference that the subject engenders in him. He looks at Aurora, slowly, from head to foot.

"Quite honestly, my dear, and forgetting altogether that you are my sister, I think you were nicer looking four or five years ago." This is his ingenuous answer. "At the same time, you are a long way the best of the family. There, I speak without reserve. If I was forced to take one of my sisters about the world, for a wager, say, as belonging to myself, I—dash it all!" cries T. S., immensely tickled by his own delicate humour, "I believe, when

it came to the push, I should put the three Miss Skeltons, impartially, in a hat, and draw!"

Aurora's lip quivers. "A pity Mr. Thomas Skelton did not arrive in Clarens a little sooner. He might have joined the train of Joyce Dormer's admirers! Admirers," adds the young lady with bitter emphasis, "to be discarded the moment Mrs. and Miss Dormer felt assured of the serious intentions, the solid thousands a year, of this poor infatuated John Farintyre."

"Joyce Dormer is good form," remarks T. S., speaking as one having authority. The young gentleman, it will be observed, has fixed opinions respecting all subjects in heaven and on earth, a complete aphoristic theory of the universe, ever ready for enunciation. "Not pretty, exactly, but the look of blood about her—little head well set on sloping shoulders, clean-cut ankles, long throat. Just the sort

of look that the Skelton family has not. Met the girl at Aldershot balls. Met the girl at Woolwich. Never took the trouble to be introduced! Never any spare dances on *my* card!"

Mr. Thomas Skelton pauses. Almost at the same moment the tall figure of Hugh Longmore draws near through the twilight; Hugh Longmore, dull-hearted enough after bidding Joyce farewell, looking blankly forward to an evening (to a life) on which neither blue eyes shall smile, nor deffest, exquisite strains of music make glad.

And Aurora holds out to him the hand of frank forgiveness. Over-sensitive pride, undue reserve, are assuredly not among the sins of Mrs. Skelton's daughters.

"Welcome back to the land of the living, Mr. Longmore. You have been seeing Mrs. and Miss Dormer off at the station? Naturally! We remarked your place was vacant at the

table d'hôte. Mr. Farintyre, I am told, accompanies them as far as Turin, but, to be sure, that may be only hearsay. *One would hope so.* You have not met my brother yet—the real original T. S.? Allow me to introduce Mr. Thomas Skelton, Mr. Longmore.”

Young Longmore bows; mentally summing up his chances of decent escape at the earliest opportunity.

“You will find it dull work in Clarens without your friends. We get up a round game of an evening, when it is too cold to go out—penny baccarat, you know, nothing to ruin anybody. Mrs. Scipio Leonidas first brought baccarat into fashion in the hotel, and ma keeps the bank. Sometimes we have a little music, but, of course,” Aurora’s tone is archly interrogative, “Mr. Longmore won’t care for anything but violin music now.”

Mr. Longmore’s answer is to the effect that he cares for all music that is good; and, as he

speaks, his eyes wander along the terrace : through the darkness he sees the wooden stairs at the top of which a golden head, a girl's voice, pure as morning, were wont to welcome him.

"That's just my case," observes T. S., with his drawl. "Don't care a curse for amateurs and pianoforte players. Give me your operative tip-toppers—Patti and Trebelli, or nothing. Them's my maxims."

The young Oxonian turns away in silence. Mr. Thomas Skelton, thin-skinned, like most gentlemen of his class, feels both movement and silence to be aggressive, and Mr. Thomas Skelton retaliates thus :

"Dormer! Dormer? Thought I recognised the Dormer girl somewhere about this morning. Hanging out, do you say, Aurora, at this hotel?"

"Mrs. and Miss Dormer have been spending a week in Clarens. They started an hour

ago for Italy. Oh, and Joycè Dormer is quite too lovely!" cries Aurora with effusion. "All the gentlemen went wild about her. The dearest little innocent face you ever beheld!"

"Innocent!" repeats T. S., with an unpleasant chuckle. "Then it could scarcely be the Joyce Dormer I have met at the Woolwich and Aldershot balls. The girl I mean is a girl with a history, you might say—a girl with several histories. Item: a well-set throat, a complexion, a pair of blue eyes, and a fiddle. A girl who has just netted some awfully rich cad out of the city—pickles, blacking, shares—I don't know how the fellow made his money—of the name of Farintyre."

A rush of hot anger thrills through Longmore's breast. The fingers of his right hand, loosely swinging at a convenient distance of two or three feet from Mr. Thomas Skelton's head, clench involuntarily. Then he cools down: by a strong effort at self-mastery, makes

no sign. What business is it, in sooth, of his, if men speak lightly or loyally of John Farintyre's betrothed? What to him is Joyce Dormer? A memory of heaven-blue eyes, of gracious sound and movement, of a pair of white, thyme-scented hands, held, for a too-brief second, before his face in the mountain moonlight.

"Yes, it was at an Aldershot ball that I first met her." And T. S. settles himself into a position as nearly vertical as the nature of Monsieur Scherer's garden chairs will permit. "Let me see, that must be something like two years ago last May. Miss Dormer was in the bloom of her first season. White muslin, lilies-of-the-valley, constant reference to mamma, and blushes. Usual attributes," says this profound and original cynic, "of the bread-and-butter ingénue. Next time I saw her was in August of the same year . . . down at Cowes, you know . . . everybody of one's set there

. . . Joyce Dormer among the rest, in all the importance of a given-out engagement. She and her mother between them had played their game well, had bagged Roger Tryan, the third or fourth biggest matrimonial catch, as it was thought, of the season."

"Roger Tryan!" cries Aurora Skelton. "What! *the* Roger Tryan who loses such shocking sums of money at Monte Carlo, and who people declare is such a broken-down *dangerous* sort of person?" adds the young lady, casting down her eyelids coyly.

"The dangerous broken-down sort of person, at the time Joyce Dormer accepted him, was the most popular speculation out, heir to a fine landed property, and one of the handsomest fellows about town. Deuced proud the Dormers were of the engagement," says Mr. Thomas Skelton. "Recollect it all as if it was yesterday. Tryan had a steam yacht down at Cowes (Lord Bartie Stornoway, intimate friend


of my own, bought her when the smash came), and Mrs. and Miss Dormer, dressed like sisters, used to be seen everywhere with him. The two prettiest women in Cowes, some men thought, but I never myself cared much about your Iceberg beauties. Never took the trouble to be introduced either to mother or daughter! Yes, the marriage was to be in October—remember the date because my friend Lord Bartie had been asked to be best man. Dreadfully bored his lordship was at the prospect! Kept away from the moors, you know, and that.”

Aurora Skelton at this juncture grows interested.

“And the wedding after all did *not* come off,” she remarks. “This much, I suppose, is certain.”

“Well, no,” answers T. S. with a yawn. “The wedding did not come off. Roger Tryan’s father took it into his head just then to fall ill; more inconvenient still, he took it

into his head, on his death-bed, to turn virtuous. Old gentleman, you see, like most of the name, had lived every hour of his life, while he could live them, and had accumulated debts of honour and otherwise, chiefly otherwise, that there was no means but one of meeting. That means was—to quash the entail. Roger Tryan, it seems, held Quixotic notions about honour, thought it a fine thing to ease the old man's conscience and whitewash the parental memory by beggaring himself. And between them—never took the trouble to enter into the legal details—they managed it, without consulting Mrs. Dormer, you may be sure ! The father died, in the odour of sanctity, and the son's income came down, with a run, from thousands to tens. No Quixotic notions, myself, in the matter of money," says Mr. Thomas Skelton. "If a fond parent of my own was to drop off the perch to-morrow, I—— "




“You are a horrid boy!” interrupts Aurora, slapping him playfully on the shoulder. “I declare you shall not talk so! Mr. Tryan is quite out of society—*we* never met him at a single Nice ball, and I am sure,” the young lady gives a bashful glance at Longmore, “one would not repeat half the stories they tell about him. Still, it was awfully nice of him to sacrifice his own interest to the family name! Joyce Dormer, or any girl of generous, delicate feeling, would appreciate such conduct.”

“Generous feeling! Delicate feeling,” repeats T. S. with elliptic contempt. “In the present advanced state of liberal education! In a girl as well known for her worldly wisdom as Joyce Dormer!”

Young Longmore turns sharply aside; indignation, something painfuller far than indignation—a suspicion that the things he hears may be within the pale of truth—holding him dumb.

“It was said by some people that she fretted. No doubt she did fret—over the loss of the estate, not the lover! Remember the first time I saw her again next winter, her and her mother, at one of the Woolwich balls. Awfully skinny about the collar-bones Miss Joyce Dormer had grown, had a colour that looked like rouge—believe it was rouge, now one thinks of it—on her cheeks. All the same she never wavered as to her ‘duty.’ Let a well-brought-up girl alone for that, when duty means money. Within a fortnight of the old man’s death, Roger Tyran was sent to the right-about (consoled himself tolerably quick, though! Not the sort of fellow to wear willow for any coquette of them all). And before next winter was over, Miss Dormer and her blue eyes and white throat had been bid for again; this time by a man old enough to be her grandfather, Sir Kenneth Grant.”

“Bid for! You ought to be ashamed of



yourself, T. S. The way you young men talk is positively too odious. What do you say, Mr. Longmore?"

Mr. Longmore says nothing. He gazes towards the western horizon, the horizon whither Joyce is travelling, with Farintyre for her escort. And his heart is sore within him : a feeling curiously near to personal shame causes his breath to come thick and fast.

"It was as much a matter of bidding as anything that goes on at Tattersalls' sales," says T. S. coolly. "After the Tyran business blew over, the girl came more in fashion than ever, collar-bone and rouge notwithstanding. Lawson of 'Ours' went wild about her, and there was Ian McIan, the big Highlander, and Vesey Armytage of the Fusiliers. And then, quietly, one fine morning, Mrs. Dormer gave out that her daughter was engaged to Sir Kenneth Grant, and would be married before the end of the season. Why *that* affair never

came off no one knew for certain. I have reason to believe," says T. S., in a tone suggesting backstair information, "that Sir Kenneth Grant repented him, ere it was too late, of his bargain, and had to bleed pretty freely to get out of it. Since then, Mrs. and Miss Dormer have taken a good deal to Intellectual Coquetry and the Continent. Know heaps of fellows who have met them on their travels. Music, poetry, sad-coloured draperies, 'going on to Naples to join Mr. Dormer and the teapots.' That's about their present figure—the figure, it seems, that has proved one too many for this idiot, Farintyre."

"And Mr. Roger Tryan consoled himself," remarks Aurora, presently; the drawling, illiterate accents of T. S. having lapsed into silence.

"Roger Tryan fell into good hands, my dear. Roger Tryan's money matters were not so desperate but that he could still find a

friend in need in this wicked world. Notably," says Thomas Skelton with emphasis, "a friend with a wife. Surely, knocking about down in the South of France, some of you girls must have come across Nessie Pinto?"

"Nessie Pinto, her red umbrella, her husband, her lapdog—and Roger Tryan! Well, yes, we have come across them rather too often," says Aurora playfully. "The group is one of the Nice institutions. People used to say—only, of course, ma never lets us listen to such things—that Roger Tryan more than once has had to pay the Pintos' gambling losses as well as his own."

"I've no doubt of it. A fellow who would do himself out of his own birthright would be madman enough even for that."

And rising from his chair, T. S. whistles, yawns, stretches his arms; then lounges, hands in pockets, after the manner of his tribe, into the salon; whither the interests of this nar-

rative do not, happily, require us to follow him.

Longmore takes a few impatient steps along the terrace. Profoundly calm as though no storm had ever convulsed her breast, shimmers Lake Lemán. Sweet smell the autumn roses as on that first evening when he and Joyce started together along the chestnut avenue towards Glion. Half a score of stars glimmer mild in the gray-blue heaven. The young man feels that Nature makes mock at him, so utterly is the chord she strikes at dissonance with his own harsh and jarring thoughts. At some hundred paces distance he sees the familiar wooden staircase up which his steps were first drawn by the magic of Joyce's violin. No light shines from the windows on the first floor, no serenest girlish voice renders night musical with its ring.

And standing here, bitterly musing, young Longmore deducts what moral he may from

the coarse and idle talk to which he has newly listened.

He feels almost as one might feel who should be shown a vile photograph of some dear face, for ever lost ; the lines horribly like in their unlikeness, although the delicate, the ineffable grace of the original has vanished. Can *this*, then, not the dream he dreamed of her, be Joyce Dormer?—this girl who could forsake her lover when fortune was blindest, who has been hardened by a trio of London seasons, who is well known at Woolwich and Aldershot. An intellectual coquette “using the past to give pathos to the little new song that she sings,” and converting even her music, the art for which she so deftly simulates passion, into a tool of vanity.

“You will join us in the salon, Mr. Longmore, will you not?” says Aurora Skelton, in dulcet accents, at his elbow. “Of course we have no classic instrumental music to offer ;

still, when the round game is over, if you would care for one of my simple ballads, as you used?"

But Longmore, as untempted by penny baccarat as by the siren persuasion of Aurora's voice, has vanished in the twilight.

CHAPTER XIII.

THIS TERRIBLE MRS. PINTO !

So falls the curtain on Clarens, so ends the bitter-sweet episode in minor of Hugh Longmore's life.

Mrs. Dormer and Joyce spend the remaining weeks of autumn at the Italian lakes ; Christmas sees them at San Remo, Mrs. Dormer having heard news that makes her wisely cautious of approaching Monte Carlo more nearly. And then, towards the end of January, spring bursts upon the Riviera. The mimosa's golden clouds, the young corn's emerald green, the almond blossoms, the violet-scents, remind Joyce, hourly, that Easter draws on apace, that her life, with all its still

fair possibilities, may, in another few weeks, be hers no longer, but the property of Mr. John Farintyre.

Why, in this heaven of blue weather, not go on to Rome at once? Mrs. Dormer throws out the suggestion one delicious morning on the San Remo sea-walk, throws it out in a quiet, negative manner, savouring not of pre-meditation. Why not secure a short space of picture-seeing and Campagna-visiting to themselves before the onerous business of millinery and dressmaking is forced upon their hands?

“Or get over the onerous millinery business now, and go to Rome with an unburthened conscience,” Joyce answers, her tone betokening more interest than the subject of bridal preparations usually awakens in her. “I have heard you say, mamma, that there are no shops, short of Paris, to compare with the Nice shops. Why not spend the next few

weeks there? A change would put us in spirits, perhaps nerve us up for the inevitable. I—I mean for Easter, and all that Easter will bring with it.”

The girl breaks off her speech curtly, and with an over-rapid change of colour.

Is the moment a favourable one for giving a gentle blow to the absent? Mrs. Dormer judges it to be so; and, for the first time since a certain momentous night in Clarens, approaches the forbidden subject of Roger Tryan.

“If things had turned out differently, if we had had the protection, even, of your father’s presence”—poor innocent Mr. Dormer looking after his teapots in Naples!—“we might have spent the winter surrounded by our Nice friends. I had not sufficient moral courage to take you there, alone. Dear Lady Joan Majendie wrote to me, Joyce, when we were at Bellagio.”

“She did so, mother. I remember the expression of your face as you read Lady Joan Majendie’s letter !”

“At the time, I shrank from putting that letter into your hands, yet I can scarcely doubt that you guess at its contents. An old acquaintance, my poor child, whom you and I scarcely wish to encounter, is wintering with his friends at a convenient distance from the Monte Carlo gambling-tables——”

“You mean Roger Tryan,” interrupts Joyce, tracing a monogram—who shall say of what initials?—with the point of her umbrella, in the sand. “Dark hints in John Farintyre’s letters made me suspect the truth, a good many weeks ago. But what if he be? Lady Joan is also in Nice, and can protect us. Are we never to enter any town during the remainder of our mortal lives for fear of coming across Mr. Roger Tryan?”

“You do not think that to see him, an

unpoetised fact, in the society of Major and Mrs. Pinto, would jar upon one's taste?"

"I think that all such weakness may be cured by heroic treatment, mother. The good old legend of the Spartans and the Helots teaches us that much! We spoke of these things before, if you remember," Joyce adds with firmness, "one night in Clarens, and we decided that for me to encounter such a sight might be salutary. It could surely not be more dangerous to see Roger Tryan once, than to think of him constantly."

There is latent wisdom in these words that Mrs. Dormer is prompt to recognise. Joyce has not been getting on as well as could be wished, of late. She works overmuch at her music, like one who would fain force mental rest through bodily exhaustion. Her eyes are heavy of a morning, feverish at night. Her flesh wastes. The San Remo doctors have hinted at "weak action of the heart." Who

shall say that to brave the worst, to see Roger Tryan sunk in the social scale, a gambler, a castaway, to see him, even, at the side of this terrible Mrs. Pinto, might not prove a wholesome tonic?

Nothing of course would suit them better than to spend four or five weeks in Nice, if an apartment for so short a term could be hired. One might, at least, write letters of inquiry to some of the agents.

"The place is really so large," muses Mrs. Dormer. "We should be so safely hemmed in by our own set of acquaintance, that I am tempted to run the risk. Such persons as Major and Mrs. Pinto would spend more of their time in the congenial atmosphere of Monte Carlo than in Nice. One might be half a winter there without encountering any of the deplorable class of English to which poor Mr. Tryan now belongs."

In which surmise little Mrs. Dormer, with

all her surface knowledge of the world, proves wrong.

The change of plans is carried out, an apartment secured, and for the first few days after arriving in Nice everything goes on with deceitful smoothness. Old friends and acquaintance are to be met with at every turning; cards of invitation pour in; Joyce's colour at the end of eight-and-forty hours begins to brighten. Mrs. Dormer, easily reassured in matters physiological, makes up her mind that stronger tonics will not be needed. All that the girl needed was change, "a restorative stimulant to the force-centres." She had grown hipped at San Remo; had dreamed over her music too exclusively, lived alone too much; eaten too little. Now, if one can but rouse her interest in the millinery or bridal business of the next four or five weeks—as a mere call on dormant energy, it matters little whether the occasion be one of pleasure or

pain—steer clear, let us hope, of all that can rekindle past folly, futile sentiment, and afterwards trust to Roman sunshine, Roman sight-seeing, until Easter !

Things, I repeat, have gone on with deceitful smoothness for some days. Then appears a *deus ex machinâ* upon the scene. Then does Mrs. Dormer gain such insight into deplorable classes, their words and ways, as sends all optimist hope, all euphemistic commonplace, to the winds.

And the insight comes at first-hand. The *deus ex machinâ* takes the form of this terrible Mrs. Pinto herself.

CHAPTER XIV.

DETERIORATION.

“COUCHE-TOI, Mufti, couche-toi!” cries a voice in rasping Anglo-French accents. “Mr. Tryan, would you have the kindness to hold my poor darling’s chain? He has taken up the most uncomfortable trick of barking at odd-looking people. Couche-toi, Mufti, donc, mauvais sujet que tu es.”

Nice lies aglow in the transparent January noontide, and Nessie Pinto, with her scarlet umbrella, her lapdog, her husband, and her husband’s friend, has for more than an hour paced up and down the most conspicuous allée of the Promenade des Anglais. Tiring of this, at last, the lady turns into a side-path, where,

by evil chance, two plainly-dressed English ladies sit reading under shadow of the palms; the "odd-looking people" at whom Mufti, guided we may suppose by some finer canine instinct, has thought fit to bark—Joyce Dormer and her mother.

Nessie is a tall-statured, large-limbed goddess of the type Rubens loved to paint. A pyramid of bleached gold hair towers, cloud-like, above her forehead. She wears (even in this divinest sunshine) a complexion; item: inordinate jewellery, inordinate heels to her boots, overtight gloves, and a throat as heroically bared as that of a German student at a ball.

Nessie Pinto is, by her own acknowledgment, thirty-four years old.

Look at her in repose, the coal-black eyes well open, the scarlet lips tightly shut, and the sternest critic could scarcely fail of calling her a handsome woman. Let her grow ani-

mated, and—hey, presto!—charm vanishes. The smile is mean, displaying—fatal defect—more of gums than of teeth; the black eyes lack steadfastness; the complexion, brilliant though it be, is of texture too opaque to admit of a blush; supposing, always, that the art of blushing were among Nessie Pinto's acquirements!

The same critic watching Joyce Dormer in one of her least animated moods might, with argument on his side, dispute the girl's claim to beauty, pronounce her expression listless, her colouring insipid, her eyes, despite their blue, cold: But let Joyce Dormer wake up, touch the strings of her Stradiuarius, speak of a theme or of a person she loves, and mark the change—the eloquent blood quick mantling under the too-clear skin, the rare smile displaying a row of porcelain teeth, the flashes of light and darkness, of tenderness and indignation, to which the “cold” blue eyes can be the channel!

The beauty of the woman, in brief, is physical; of the earth earthy, a coarse page that the crowd who runs may read. The loveliness of the girl is spiritual; something to be felt, like a verse by Shelley, or a melody by Schubert.

And at the present miserable crisis of Joyce Dormer's history, the beauty that is of the earth earthy, would seem beyond doubt or question to be in the ascendant.

"Mamma, did you remark who passed upon our left?" asks the poor girl, very low, and with a trembling lip. "That lady must be Mrs. Pinto. Yes, there can be no doubt about it. We have heard the description so often of the Frenchified husband, the umbrella, the lapdog, and Roger Tyran." And though Joyce feels that the heart in her breast has turned to ice, she brings out the name of her old lover with a kind of forced courage.

Marking her place with a slender, gloved

finger, Mrs. Dormer looks up from her book—*Mill on Liberty*. It is one of her few dogmas that no day should pass without reading a chapter of John Stuart, or Buckle, “simply as a kind of tuning-fork, to raise one’s mind above the dead-level pitch of frivolity.” Her gray eyes, fresh and wondering as a child’s, turn placidly in the direction whither Joyce had bidden her look.

“The people with the umbrella and the dog . . . for a moment it occurred to me that the creature might have barked at us under orders! Yes, I remarked them. This terrible Mrs. Pinto, if it be she, is really handsome, or would be handsome, *with* education, and *without* paint. One mourns always over a nice-looking, hopelessly vulgar woman. The world is not so full of beauty that we can afford to have raw material thrown away.”

The speech is characteristic. If Mrs. Dormer meditated destruction to her worst

enemy, she would plan her campaign from the vantage-ground 'of taste; would scathe her foe by some calmly crushing analysis of flounce, head-dress, or complexion, yet give no sign that human passion, not artistic feeling, lent animus to the blow.

“Would you have believed, mother, that any man's taste could so deteriorate? I regret nothing, of course——”

Mrs. Dormer's pulse gives just one throb of triumph.

“And everything connected with Roger Tryan belongs to the dear old days that are past and done with. Yet to think of a taste that was once refined, to think of the Roger Tryan we knew, sinking to associates like these!”

On occasions, rare and pointedly well selected, Mrs. Dormer's vision changes focus. She becomes short-sighted now. Disengaging a double eyeglass from her waist-belt, she

holds it up for some seconds upon the bridge of her delicate nose.

"I quite agree with you, my love, about deterioration in a general way. You did not, I think, read that little book of Professor Lankester's? Really his remarks about our ruined cousins, the Ascidians, are most suggestive. Are we hopelessly degenerate? Is the whole human race drifting on to the condition of an intellectual barnacle, or is it not?"

At this question, still more at the smooth chill tone in which it is put, Joyce turns impatiently aside.

"We have," proceeds Mrs. Dormer cheerfully—"men and women as well as barnacles—three possibilities open to us: balance, elaboration, degeneracy. There is no standing still. As regards the group around yonder red umbrella, I must confess the different members composing it appear to me in singularly harmonious keeping."

“Mother——”

“I speak with deliberation, Joyce. Accompanying such a lady, and such a lapdog, it is natural and fitting, within a given radius of Monte Carlo, to see a pair of do-nothing, hope-nothing English loungers, who have once been gentlemen.”

“Once been? Mother, you are severe. Do you mean that Roger Tryan could ever cease to be *that*?”

The group around the red umbrella is by this time far out of hearing of Mrs. and Miss Dormer’s voices. But as Joyce speaks Tryan’s name he turns (in obedience, it would seem, to a short whisper from Nessie Pinto) and recognises her.

The man and girl who, during two or three love-lit months, found heaven, a passionate one, each in the other’s eyes, have met again—thus!

Moved by a sudden reasonless impulse,

Joyce Dormer starts to her feet. She forgets Major and Mrs. Pinto, forgets all the eyes and tongues of the crowded Promenade des Anglais. It seems to her only that her lost lover's face says "Come," and that she must obey him.

Mrs. Dormer, who forgets nothing, rises also. Shutting up John Stuart Mill, Mrs. Dormer rests her firm small hand upon her daughter's arm, stands for a moment or two as though absorbed in the fair panorama of the sea and shore, then turns away in an exactly opposite direction to that taken by Roger Tryan and the Pintos.

"It is time for us to be going homeward, Joyce. Glorious though the sunshine is, I should like to have one more practice of our new 'Poëme Symphonique,' and our friends have promised to be with us early."

For already Mrs. Dormer has started a weekly afternoon, one that even amidst the

formidable competition of Nice "afternoons," bids fair for popularity.

"What were we speaking about?" she runs on, with the perfect naturalness that is the most difficult of arts. "Mr. Tryan—of course, and those distressing friends of his. Yes, poor Roger was a gentleman by birth; I used once to think a gentleman in taste. But he has gone down hill fast." Mrs. Dormer shows sufficient interest in Roger Tryan's pace to give a pretty shudder. "We are the slaves, all of us, of environment. A white poppy, you know, loses its whiteness if it grow among coloured ones. Should Roger Tryan change as much during the next two years as he has done during the last, he will have sunk below the level of his friend and associate—Nessie Pinto's husband."

And it would be hard, even for Mrs. Dormer, to utter a prediction more cruel.

CHAPTER XV.

SHE THAT IS KINDEST.

NESSIE PINTO's husband is a slim-waisted, shabbyish, orange-bearded little Major, verging on fifty. Something in the cut of his gaiters, the arrangement of his neck-tie—some expression in the furtive eyes that never, for an instant, encounter yours, would make you, at a first glance, connect Pinto with British book-making and the British ring. At the next you are inclined to set him down as the out-at-elbows manager of a travelling French circus, his big-checked suit, much-worn yellow gloves, and Frenchified air—shall we add, his wife and Mufti?—giving Major Pinto a foreign varnish, to which, perhaps, an article

of plain home manufacture might be preferable.

Did not Talleyrand say he misdoubted any Englishman who spoke French too well?

Pinto, in a certain sense, speaks French too well; ungrammatically as a porter, but with an absence of foreign accent, an acquaintance with idiom, especially the idiom of the gaming-table and the turf, that render Frenchmen, themselves (such Frenchmen as are his fellows in the neighbourhood of Nice and Monaco), uncertain as to his nationality.

In what branch of our service Nessie's husband obtained his rank of Major, I am ignorant. He shows a shyness, not uncommon among brave men, in speaking of his military achievements; but will boast freely enough of old sporting exploits in the eastern counties, and has been known, when unusually sentimental in the small hours, to allude, over a

fourth glass of whisky-and-water, to his "boyish days at Eton."

The Pintos' means of subsistence may be represented by *x*. Nessie, in her higher flights of rhetoric, has been heard to talk of Pinto's allowance. But then Nessie has also been heard to talk of "our county," "our Conservative influence," "Pinto's family," "Pinto's stud of horses." Conjecturally, it is believed that this gentleman was once connected with the stables of a notorious peer at Newmarket. As a matter of fact, it is known that he quitted Newmarket abruptly, on the morrow of a darkly inauspicious Two Thousand, never more to show his face in that or any other English racing locality.

Upon the surface, Major Pinto's way of living would seem unpremeditated as a butterfly's—now shooting in Corsica, now baccarat-playing in Naples and Florence, now gambling—looking on, perhaps, at the ventures of his


wife, rather than actually risking money of his own—at Monte Carlo. I should also add, as a possible source of revenue, the friendship, during the past two years, of Roger Tryan.

How did that friendship come about? How sank the high-souled son, the chivalrous lover, the man whose breath was more than a bond from other men, to association so unworthy?

The writer who could solve that question, analyse the hold coarseness will gain, under some adverse conditions, upon men of delicate moral fibre, might contribute a chapter worth reading to the natural history of human weakness.

To start with, there was the factor that brings about half the loves and friendships in the world—propinquity.

In the first gloomy days succeeding his father's death and his own altered fortune, it



chanced that Roger Tryan came across Nessie and her husband at one of the remoter Bavarian watering-places. Some years before, when Tryan was a Cambridge undergraduate, he and Pinto had formed, or so the fact stood recorded in the Major's plastic memory, a hunting-field acquaintance. This acquaintance, renewed in a spot where a two-days' old *Times*, sulphur-water, buckhorn carvings, and a midday German dinner, were the main resources, soon developed into intimacy; accident ripened it into something, which, lacking a better word, we may call friendship. In the course of a hill excursion to some neighbouring ruins, Roger Tryan, dutifully attendant at the side of Mrs. Pinto's donkey, it came to pass that the lady's steed slipped, and that her cavalier, in saving her from an awkward fall, met, himself, with a sprained ankle.

The circumstances were by no means romantic, the sprain was not severe. For

more than a week, however, Roger could not put his foot to the ground, and during this week, Mrs. Pinto, carried away, by the grateful impulses of the moment, constituted herself his nurse.

And to do so required some amount of moral hardihood. Major Pinto, within four-and-twenty hours of the accident, was obliged to run away on business—that inscrutable, that convenient Pinto business, of which no man has ever known the nature! He remained absent ten days. But Nessie was not a woman to flinch at trifles; certainly not a woman to stifle grateful impulses out of regard for the shallow good opinion of the world. The thirty or forty English people in Langen Waldstein might surmise, lift their eyebrows, shake their heads, and pass upon the other side, an' they listed. Nessie had the courage of her opinions through it all. She was seen each morning tripping across the Kurgarten

with flowers and wild strawberries to Roger Tryan's hotel. She chatted beside the invalid on his balcony, played chess and double-dummy for his amusement, dined with him—yes, and after dinner, a hundred or so eyes from the Kurgarten looking on, would prevail upon him to smoke his pipe and sip his brandy-and-seltzer (of which she partook) exactly as she might have done had Major Pinto been present.

It was this conduct, I think, that first won Tryan's respect.

Nessie's gratitude was exaggerated, an averted tumble from a donkey scarcely affording ground for melodramatic self-sacrifice. Her complexion, poor dear woman, was too much made up for morning wear in Langen Waldstein. Her aspirates and her syntax were alike open to animadversion.

But see what nobility of heart was hers, what courage, what staunchness!

Roger Tyran, bear in mind, had been newly galled to the quick. He felt bitter against Joyce Dormer for her infidelity, bitter against the whole tribe of worldly mothers, and the love yielded by their too obedient daughters, not to a suitor himself, but to the suitor's acres. Women of cultivation, of birth, of the world . . . Ay, of *those* he had had ample experience. Was not Nessie Pinto richer in the fair womanly qualities of compassion and unselfishness than nine-tenths of them ?

And thus it happened, with a little help from without, that the rupture between Joyce Dormer and the man she loved became irreparable !

Pre-eminent among the small English colony at Langen Waldstein, was Lady Joan Majendie, head of the great banking house of Majendie and Colquhoun : a slight acquaintance of Roger Tryan's, an intimate friend of Mrs. Dormer's. In using the term head of the firm,

I speak advisedly. Does not every one know what place Mr. Majendie—at this particular period going through a “cure” for rheumatism—holds in the firm and in his domestic relations? Mrs. Dormer was never without the amiable infirmity of title-loving common to the best of us. It was her pleasure also to have a side entrance into as many different London circles as possible; the gay, the literary, the artistic, the Other-worldly.


Lady Joan Majendie constituted her Open Sesame to the Other-worldly.

At seasons when she has felt sure of her audience—notably in Joyce’s absence—little Mrs. Dormer has been known to speak of her dearest Lady Joan as “That Saint.”

Well, that saint was here, in Langen Waldstein, bent on upsetting the belief of an idolatrous Catholic peasantry, while the poor banker meekly made his dinner off herbs or sipped and sat in sulphur. And on the first day

Roger Tryan was able to limp forth from his hotel, leaning on Mrs. Pinto's arm (he could have got along well alone, but Nessie insisted upon enacting walking-stick), Lady Joan Majendie, bustling around on conversion work, in her poke bonnet, blue spectacles, and with her bag full of halfpenny German tracts, met, and cut him.

One may honestly think that, in doing so, the saint acted according to her lights. Roger Tryan's late conduct, in respect of his father's debts, had sunk him to zero in Lady Joan's good graces. These highflown deeds of abnegation were, according to her system of ethics, pure Quixotism, a branch of human weakness to which saints, when solid pounds, shillings, and pence are concerned, are especially inimical. And now—"Ah, my friend," wrote Lady Joan, in a solemn note of warning to Mrs. Dormer, "now, his engagement to your dear Joyce scarce broken off, his social downfall fresh in men's mind, Mr. Tryan is to be seen, publicly



advertising himself at the side of a creature like this!"

Possibly, if Lady Joan Majendie's visiting-lists could have been scanned, creatures as faulty as Nessie Pinto had been found there. But these would be well-married creatures, or high-born creatures, or creatures strict, exceedingly, as to the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin. Hard-and-fast lines must be drawn *somewhere*, especially by a saint who is connected with the mammon of unrighteousness through big banking interests. And, as I have said, Lady Joan Majendie, coming across Tryan and Nessie Pinto as they were slowly walking along the Langen Waldstein Kurgarten, looked very straight indeed from behind her blue spectacles, and cut Roger Tryan dead.

He enjoyed the humour of the thing immensely at the time, so did his companion. Major Pinto returned that evening, his busi-

ness over, and Nessie, who really had a pretty talent for acting, depicted the scene in an improvised poke bonnet, a pair of spectacles, and a bag, supposed to be full of "goody" literature, for her husband's diversion.

But Lady Joan Majendie's cutting was only the beginning of the end, and it may well be that the humour of this situation wore off to Roger Tryan's mind as he became more practically used to it.

In Langen Waldstein, as among certain London sets, the Majendie opinion carried weight — was acted upon. People had no worse things to say of Roger than that he was his own enemy, a Don Quixote, running his head against perpetual windmills; a Bayard, walking on too high a plane for our poor nineteenth-century consciences! But how could ladies bow to Bayard when he elected to spend his mornings, afternoons, and evenings in the society of those terrible Pintos? Was

not the easiest, the obvious solution, to follow the example of that dear, wise old serpent, Lady Joan—not bow at all?

And then it was that Joyce, remorse-stricken under the sense that she had treated him ignobly, eager for explanation, willing to repair her mother's first injustice and consider the world well lost so that she might but lose it for Roger Tryan—then it was that the girl heard of her lost lover in connection with Major and Mrs. Pinto.

“Break the painful truth to Joyce as tenderly as you can,” wrote dear Lady Joan in a second letter to Mrs. Dormer. “If, indeed, you judge it wise to let Joyce know the truth at all. Mr. Roger Tryan is the devoted attendant of a quite too notorious Mrs. Pinto. I am afraid, from what Mr. Majendie tells me”—on rare occasions poor Mr. Majendie was thus pushed to the fore in the capacity of stalking-horse — “that it does not better

matters to add, Mr. Roger Tryan is the friend of Mrs. Pinto's husband."

The Langen Waldstein episode took place more than two years before the date of my story, and during these two years Roger Tryan's chance-formed intimacy with the Pintos has remained unbroken. His poverty, it must be borne in mind, was relative: an income remaining to him after the elder Tryan's debts were paid that to many a small landholder or country vicar would seem competence, and that afforded much nice picking to his friend, Major Pinto; for this gentleman has ever believed, with Panurge, that it is a divine thing to lend, an heroic virtue to owe, and carries out his ideal of heroism fully in his everyday practice.

"We'll finish the winter off comfortably here in Nice," remarks Nessie's husband, as the trio saunter back from the Promenade des

Anglais to Tryan's hotel, where the usual lunch and champagne await them ; " spend the summer in Savoy—Evian-les-Bains, or some of those places where a little quiet, friendly play goes on under the rose, and then run down to Corsica, say, in November. If a man can have a dinner of seven dishes with good wine for nothing anywhere, 'tis in Corsica. But, you know, my dear fellow," runs on Pinto genially, " we must really set up joint housekeeping when next we settle down. Nessie says so." Roger Tryan at the present moment occupies a bachelor apartment in the Hôtel des Trois Empereurs, while Major and Mrs. Pinto board at a second-class pension outside the town—that dreary Pension Potpourri to which Mrs. Skelton and her daughters give the name of home. " I've never known Nessie wrong yet in the matter of £ s. d. Whatever plans we decide on for the summer, we must take a flat between us next winter, and settle down to

joint-stock housekeeping. It would be an economy in the end."

And an economy, no doubt, joint-stock housekeeping would prove—to Major and Mrs. Pinto!

CHAPTER XVI.

TO MONTE CARLO.

I HAVE said that Mrs. Dormer's weekly reception bids fair for popularity; it comprises more than the usual elements of success to-day. Two or three professional musical artists, who gracefully keep themselves in the background in order that the amateurs shall shine; a young English lord, celebrated by his political pamphlets à la Bradlaugh; an Austrian count with delicate Van Dyck fingers, a hectic flush, and a zither; some art-critics; a well-known, bare-throated, much-jewelled Spanish duke; an Italian poet, whose best meal of the day is made at the five-o'clock tea-tables of intellectual ladies; a big, but well-thawed Oxford

don ; and three or four of the prettiest English women in Nice.

The reception is a success, and Joyce, whose face and manner are fuller of brightness than usual, brings tones such as she never brought before from the strings of Stradiuarius. When all is over, however, when the last guest has departed and the sombre January twilight fills the room, the poor child sinks with weary relief into a chair beside the olive-wood fire, and gazes into its ruddy depths with tired, aching eyes.

Carefully studying her daughter from the opposite chimney-corner, herself in shadow, Mrs. Dormer discerns that her cheek is of mortal pallor, the attitude of her limbs nerveless ; a hollow, worn look is about her temples. A little time more, if she continue to make downward progress like this, and Joyce will be a girl no longer. Restless stirrings of vain passion, regrets beyond the reach of self-

interest, beyond the power of will, are already doing their dreary work on outline and complexion.

A little time more—Mrs. Dormer realises the fact with a start — and she might wake, some fine morning, to find herself the mother of an oldish daughter, if happily, next Easter . . .

Joyce breaks the silence abruptly, in a voice that rings almost with harshness through the refined, violet-scented room :

“Mother, how tired one gets of art and art talk, and cultivated people, altogether — does one not ?”

Mrs. Dormer answers in her most level, most evasive tone :

“I fancy our little party was a success, Joyce. Our socialist lord really gave us some socialist invective. Dear old Filippo Filippi recited only one poem on the wrongs of Italy, but recited it well. Our Austrian’s Van Dyck

fingers were delightful on the zither. And as to you, Joyce——”

“I surpassed myself, mamma. My playing was like that of Joachim in his youth, with a touch of Neruda in her prime. My looks were those of a Saint Cecilia. A bit of mimosa that fell from my hair was distinctly precious. Unfortunately, these sugared things do not improve by keeping. I was told last winter at another afternoon party, here in Nice, that my head was like an abstraction of Fra Angelico’s, nay, even like a saint upon a gold ground of Cimabue’s. The same discriminative critic, in rather more affected accents, told me the same thing to-day. Ought I to feel flattered, do you think?”

Mrs. Dormer skips nimbly away from the subject of intellectual tea-parties.

“You are physically overtaxed, child. You put too much emotion into your playing. That is the danger of the violin. Eminent

medical men have told me so. To play as you have done to-day involves a state of 'nerve-storm,' for which the performer has to pay dearly afterwards. And we have so much to get through this evening." Mrs. Dormer consults a tiny set of tablets that hang from her waist-belt—"Lady Joan Majendie's dinner; Mrs. Fitzpatrick's tableaux vivants; the Countess of Cairngorm's séance——"

"With a freshly-imported medium from New York, and entirely novel effects in the way of spirit-rappings and lime-light. What a programme of pleasure! First, the world."

"The world! In Lady Joan Majendie's house?"

"Yes, mother. These suave, serious parties, with their wines and plats, and pet dignitaries and unctuous talk, are the very acme of worldliness. Then the flesh. Then the——"

"My love!"

“Mamma, I am in no mood for any of it. I am sick, sick at heart to-night, weary, to desperation.”

And in truth there is a white fixed look round her lips that Mrs. Dormer knows; a look with which Mrs. Dormer grew unpleasantly familiar at the time of Roger Tryan’s dismissal.

“If you are really overdone, Joyce, we will give up our engagements—nothing can be easier than to send excuses to all these people—and spend a quiet evening by ourselves. See,” says Mrs. Dormer, drawing a letter, cheerfully, from her pocket; “I have something of a very important and very pleasant nature to consult you about. You know that I heard from John Farintyre this morning?”

“Yes, mamma.”

The nearer they get to Easter the more does Joyce relegate the Farintyre correspondence to her mother.

“Well, he wants me to find out your taste, clandestinely, poor fellow, about the re-setting of some family diamonds. One of the best London houses has furnished patterns, which he encloses, and——My dear Joyce, *are* you listening to a single word that I say, or are you not?”

Mrs. Dormer has crossed to her daughter's side. She stands there, John Farintyre's letter, the diamonds from one of the best London houses, between her hands.

For a moment or two Joyce remains dumb, motionless; then she starts quickly to her feet, such a blaze of colour, of warmth, of eager passionate longing, overspreading her tired face as makes her more than lovely.

“Mamma, dearest, you have been very good to me all my life, and I—have given you nothing but anxiety in return. That is the usual debtor and creditor account, I suppose, between parents and children. You are all

goodness, now. You wish, for my own sake, that I should be married, find a worthy husband in poor Mr. Farintyre, settle down, as other girls do, take an interest in my diamonds and my visiting-list, and be content. And I—mother, I will tell you the truth—I fret more over the happiness which I have lost, every day I live. When I saw Roger Tryan this morning, in the companionship,” says the girl, with miserable emphasis, “*of his friends*, I knew that, were he to raise a finger, to-morrow I would be his wife, I would follow him, ay, to the uttermost ends of the world——”

“Joyce!”

“Oh, it is humiliating—shameful. I know everything you would say beforehand. You cannot blush for my weakness more than I blush for it myself. Still, it is so. If sometimes I find myself thinking unawares of the sweetness there might be in life, I am really thinking

of him. If I dream at night that my wedding-day has come, that I am taking oaths of love and faith before the altar, Roger Tryan—not the other—is at my side.”

“All this is too painful.”

Poor Mrs. Dormer, in truth, looks and feels as though earth, this excellent little planet that holds banking firms, titled persons, diamond necklaces, John Farintyres, were crumbling beneath her feet.

“The more painful, because it is fact. However, you need not be afraid for me,” adds Joyce hurriedly. “The worst is over. Considering that I have had strength to live through the last two years, I am not likely to die of a broken heart now. Not likely to die, and still . . . Oh, mother! taking me in kindest pity, and knowing, as only you can, what a wreck my life is, will you grant me a favour to-night?”

“Joyce, do not look at me like that. Of

course I will grant you any favour you choose to ask. You want to send excuses to Lady Joan, to the other people. It shall be done. You want—yes, dear child, I read your thoughts—to go away from Nice. We will start for Rome immediately. Our coming here was a mistake. It can be set straight at the very small cost of paying one month's rent of this apartment. Naturally you are distressed at having to witness such a scene as came before our eyes to-day. You would like——”

“I would like, mamma,” cries Joyce with ashen, pleading face, “to go over to Monte Carlo to-night. I have heard you say often that Monte Carlo was a thing to be studied, a scene to be looked at, as we look at Pompeii or Herculaneum, without ethical bias. . . . Well, and now I ask you, as I never asked anything before in my life, to take me there!”

The request, set down in black and white, may seem cold enough; made by Joyce with

voice, eyes, lips, all quivering at passion's white-heat, even Mrs. Dormer melts—not without the sanction of reason. Persons accustomed to the sick will tell you how, in certain maladies, a patient, fever-tossed and distraught, has been known to dream of an herb or drug ignored by physicians that shall be his cure. Who can say that some kindred instinct is not working in Joyce's sick heart, that the truest stroke of policy may not be to humour her in her whim?

“Would you wound yourself voluntarily, Joyce? Dear Lady Joan, from a sense of duty, has made inquiries about a most painful subject. Five evenings a week, it is said, these terrible Pintos spend at Monte Carlo! Surely I need not add more. You cannot wish for a repetition of this morning's scene—this morning's scene, heightened by all the wretched accessories of Monte Carlo?”

“I wish to visit the place to-night, mother.

From beginning to end of our music this afternoon, Stradiuarius seemed to be giving me one message, pressing upon me one piece of advice—‘Monte Carlo. Go to Monte Carlo.’ I heard the words in major and in minor, spoken by Beethoven and Mozart and Spohr! Oh, mamma, can it be possible that to-night may be a turning-point, not for my outward life—*that*, of course, is settled—but for my heart, my peace? If there be a chance, a possibility, of my getting into a better road, is it not worth the trial?”

Mrs. Dormer looks obdurate—sure sign that it is Mrs. Dormer’s intention to surrender.

“The scheme is quite too wild. See how late it is, Joyce. Nearly six already.”

“The ‘gamblers’ train’ goes at half-past seven, mamma. I have learnt these wicked things through some of our unctuous friends’ denunciation of them.”

“And our engagements? If Lady Joan Majendie should hear——”

“I cannot see that we must shape our lives to please Lady Joan Majendie. Lady Joan has been to Monte Carlo herself on errands of proselytism. Who shall say that you and I, mother, may not make some convert to-night?”

“But for you to be seen there, alone—I mean with so inefficient a duenna as myself!” Little Mrs. Dormer glances disparagingly at her own over-youthful image in the mirror. “It would simply not be respectable for us, unprotected, to show our faces on such a scene.”

“Of course it would not!” cries Joyce. “It behoves us, therefore, to take a protector. Where could we find better security than in the white locks of Filippo Filippi? You know that our poor poet, if he had the means, would go with us to any part of Europe. Ah,

mamma!"—with quick, unwonted effusion she snatches her mother's hand, she raises it to her lips—"shall I ever be able to repay you for your goodness? Shall I ever forget your unselfishness in allowing me to do this thing?"

"I—I wish one knew whether it was correct to wear a bonnet or a hat!" murmurs the elder lady, softly troubled.

If the very temptation of Eve came to a woman of Mrs. Dormer's type, her perplexity would be one of taste. Would it be correct to accept that apple from a comparative stranger, or would it not?

CHAPTER XVII.

SOLD.

THE preparations for their evening's adventure are gone through with feverish haste by Joyce. Notes of excuse are written and despatched; Filippo Filippi is told, on a tiny sheet of pink paper, in Joyce's prettiest Italian, that two forlorn donzelle mean, in less than an hour's time, to put themselves under his chivalrous escort. Then comes a harder task to the girl's over-wrought powers—she must eat; Mrs. Dormer, whose sense of commonplace bodily comfort is always in its right place, averring that, whatever else be doubtful, an improvised dinner before they start is essential.

Human beings are exceedingly complicated

machines, wound up by putting food into their mouths. With a prospect of unusual strain before one, let cold chicken and a glass of good Orvieto be taken as the best possible source of moral strength. Let the machine be wound up !

Joyce strives bravely to obey. She drinks a glass of wine, she forces down morsel after morsel of food, feeling as though each must choke her and prove the last. Then she dresses, her mother's finer intuitions having solved the important question of fit attire for Monte Carlo by gaslight—beaver hats, tied under the chin like those worn by Jane Austen's heroines ; black dresses, black gloves, no ornaments, above all, *no veils*. “A veil worn under doubtful circumstances,” says Mrs. Dormer, “may be construed into an excuse. An excuse is a self-accusation. It is one of those small matters about which a woman of delicate feeling cannot be too solicitous.” Ten

minutes later they are making their way along the narrow, ill-lighted street in which Filippo Filippi lives.

"If Filippo should be out, should never have received our note!" Joyce suggests this as they wait inside the porte-cochère of the poet's house, a slow-footed old portress having gone up to the fourth étage in search of him.

"Worse still, if there should be a Signora Filippi," adds Mrs. Dormer placidly.

For courageous ladies hunting lions, with a view to afternoon exhibition, are wholly ignorant of the lion's domestic comings and goings. Such cambric as the poet displays above his surtout is irreproachable. Notes sent through the post to a certain address command his presence. Filippo Filippi and his recitals are to be met at all the "best" houses in Nice. With what further details as to wife or fortune need the mind of a

giver of parties, a purveyor of celebrities, be troubled?

“If there be a Signora Filippi, and she say nay—a hundred times nay—we will go to Monte Carlo!” cries Joyce, with nervous haste. “Absurd to think that two strong-minded Englishwomen could not, under all circumstances, protect themselves! Why, with such a manner as I can put on when I choose,” and the girl draws her slender throat aloft, “I might pass quite well, little mother, for your chaperon.”

The contingency, however, does not arrive; the Signora of Mrs. Dormer’s imagination exists not. Ere the portress has had time to shuffle down the hundred steps leading from the fourth story, Filippo himself appears upon the scene. Filippo, fur-cloaked, shivering with true Southern chilliness at having to face a breath of evening air, but gallantly ready to accompany two pretty women to any part of

Europe—so long, of course, as the price of his railway ticket be paid out of the pretty women's pockets!

Filippo Filippi, content, like many another Italian patriot, to live out of the country for which, in rhyme, he is ready to give his blood, is a tall, grandly-built Florentine of fifty-five or sixty; a man, every inch a poet—white bearded, eagle-eyed, with a Titianesque head set finely on his shoulders, with just a flavour of garlic pervading his courtly presence. The fur on Filippo Filippi's cloak may be past its prime; he wears a pair of oft-cleaned lemon-coloured gloves, a pair of antique, polished shoes, a white cravat of the fashion of thirty years ago; and still the nameless look which, lacking a better word, we call distinction, is his.

Even among the cosmopolitan rabble that at this hour throngs the Nice platform, men feel inclined to ask the shabby old poet's name. Men feel inclined to do more than ask the

names of the two English ladies, with their refined fair faces, their quiet dress and demeanour, whom the shabby old poet accompanies.

“Let us hide ourselves away, mother,” whispers Joyce, when they at length succeed in finding an empty carriage. “Make Filippo Filippi understand that we are spectators not actors in the scene. Persuade him, above all, to speak no word of French or English.” She adds this quickly, and with a backward glance towards the station. “I have a suspicion that Major and Mrs. Pinto are close behind us. If we do not betray ourselves by our speech we may reach Monte Carlo unnoticed.”

The warning is given only just in time. Barely have they taken their places in the farther, least-lighted compartment, barely has Mrs. Dormer whispered a significant hint to Filippo Filippi, when a loud voice and laugh are heard approaching along the platform. A

moment later, and Mrs. Pinto, with bangles rattling and ribbons flowing—Mrs. Pinto, her husband, her dog, and Roger Tryan, come to a halt immediately beside the door of the carriage that holds Joyce Dormer.

“Room here?” asks Pinto, putting in his face with his air of easy familiarity. “That’s all right. Tryan—Nessie! Here you are. Empty carriage, or only a Mounseer or two.” For here Major Pinto catches sight of Filippo Filippi’s distinctly un-British head. “Come, jump in.”

But Mrs. Pinto hesitates. “‘Dogs and persons under twenty-one years of age,’ not admitted to the gaming-tables by a paternal administration,” she observes playfully. “What in the world are we going to do with Mufti?”

“You should have thought of that before you let Mufti follow you, my love,” cries Major Pinto.

Whatever the real state of things between

this husband and this wife—and that it is a volcanic state, all such persons as know them well can certify—the surface of the crater bloometh greenly. You would say the Pinto household thought but with one mind, acted but with one intention, so nicely do Nessie's little whims and fancies and forgetfulnesses piece in with the foregone conclusions of her lord.

“As we are here,” resumes that gentleman, “it is a shame you should be disappointed. You and Tryan had better go on to Monte Carlo together, Ness, and I'll be a blessed martyr—take Mufti home. What do you say, Tryan? You don't mind looking after Mrs. Pinto for one evening?”

For *one* evening! What has Roger Tryan's whole bored life sunk to but “looking after” Mrs. Pinto—on racecourses, in public ballrooms, at theatres, in every place, on every occasion, when Major Pinto's time and talents can be elsewhere better employed.

"The 'one evening' must be a short two hours," says Nessie, her foot upon the step. "Our pension gives a dance this evening. Mr. Tryan, you do not forget, I hope, that your company is requested by the guests at the Pension Potpourri. You are coming, of course?"

Tryan answers with the stereotyped "delighted" that a man pushed into such a strait has no choice save to utter; entering the carriage, he takes a corner place opposite the wife of his friend.

But his tone is cold; so Joyce, in her fast-beating heart, decides; his manner listless. All the old bright look of youth and interest has died, although Roger Tryan is some years under thirty, from out his face.

That he has sunk to a lower level may be fact. *He is not content there.* And, oh! inexplicable human nature, the suspicion of his discontent half constitutes a hope in Joyce Dormer's breast.

Nessie Pinto has all the instability of manner that characterises women of her class : at one minute is high-pitched and self-conscious ; at the next, noisily familiar ; at the next, affectedly nervous. This horrible mistral ! She will certainly get neuralgia if she remain exposed to it. Fancy having to appear at our pension ball with anything so quite too awful as a swelled face. If Mr. Tryan please, they will change places. And then, the places being changed, Nessie bethinks her that if she travel with her back to the engine she will have a sick headache. And then, going back, with clash of bangles and rustle of silks, to her first position, her thoughts revert to Mufti.

For what object but the attracting of attention (a pretty woman with a lapdog being a degree more noticeable than a pretty woman without one) does poor Mufti exist ? Pinto, in his rough fashion, cares for the creature, and is repayed by Mufti with lavish usury of

love. Nessie, when once she quits the foot-lights, cares for nothing, will indeed vent any little sense of social failure or disappointment upon the first object—generally Mufti—that comes across her.

“Be sure, Pinto, whatever you do, you see to my dear darling’s supper. A minced chicken’s leg, if they can find him one, and plenty of salt. Promise me sacredly you will not be off to your horrid club whist and forget him.”

Major Pinto does not play a rubber of whist, certainly does not enter his club at this hour of the evening, once during the season. But Nessie is fictitious to the finger tips, compelled, even before no larger audience than Roger Tryan, to say the thing that is not.

“That is right,” Pinto having sworn fidelity as regards the minced chicken’s leg and the salt. “Now, have I got my scent-bottle? Those Monte Carlo rooms are so excruciatingly hot. Ah, here it is. Mr.

Tryan, please, like a good creature, take care of my scent-bottle for me. And my purse? Surely, I can never have forgotten that." And Nessie goes through a pantomime of searching in her dress and jacket pockets. "Pinto, Pinto, my dear, don't go away. No Monte Carlo for me to-night, unless you are game to lend me half-a-dozen naps. I have left my purse behind."

Major Pinto's lips take the form of whistling. He buttons up his coat.

"You know I never encourage you in your pleasant vices, Nessie. If you gamble, it must be out of your own pin money." Major Pinto's wife's pin money! "Haven't you any spare bracelets or rings about you?" he asks jocosely. "The croupiers know us pretty well by sight. They might allow you to stake in kind."

On this Nessie Pinto bends over to Roger Tryan; with a supplicating clasp of her gloved hands, with a plaintive appeal in her belladon-

naed eyes, she whispers a word or two in his ear.

“Stand banker? Why, of course I can. Ridiculous for you to think of going back.” So replies a voice that sends the blood hurrying through Joyce Dormer’s veins. “I would not advise you to endanger your luck by even a temporary loan of Pinto’s napoleons. Good-night, old fellow.” And the two men shake hands: little does either of them reckon that it shall be for the last time! “Look well after your points at whist, and don’t forget Mufti’s supper. Mrs. Pinto and I feel in the vein. We are going to recoup ourselves at last for all old losses.”

The guard at this moment approaches; he is just preparing to shut the door of the carriage when Mrs. Pinto jumps up, and stretching her head forth through the window, calls vehemently to her husband. One thing is still wanted—a kiss from Mufti. She would

be sure of ill-luck did she depart without the dearest creature's caress. She *must* have it! And, indeed, a scene, an affectation, anything that shall bring her into notice, although it be but the notice of guards and railway servants, is a necessity to this woman's tawdry, restless, never-satisfied soul.

"Mufti, embrasse moi," she shrieks in fluent, vilely accented French. "Souhaite la bonne chance à ta Maman, petit brebis."

And then Pinto must hold the animal aloft for Nessie to kiss.

In palmier, more respectable days, Mufti, an actor of merit, took the leading part in a troupe of strolling dog performers, scaled ladders, played cards, smoked his cigarette, fought his duels as gravely as any gentleman in France. Sunk though he be in estate, some glimmering of self-respect would seem to linger in Mufti's conscience. He struggles, rolls his eyes, and cunningly resents the

indignity put upon him by attempting to lick the rose-bloom from his mistress's cheek.

Nessie Pinto starts back, using a tolerably blunt English expletive ; then, recovering her presence of mind, she insists that Mufti shall shake hands with Tryan.

"Donne la patte à Monsieur, mon amour. Yes, indeed, Mr. Tryan, you must. I will take no refusal. Whoever loves me loves my dog. Surely, after *that*, you will not have the heart to slight poor Mufti ?"

And so on, ad nauseam ; the usual tone of such women when they believe their power of fascination to be unlimited, and men's patience a thing of adamant.

Sick and chill, Joyce Dormer draws farther back in her corner of the carriage.

"We ought never to have come," whispers her mother, with a tenderness that almost wrings a sob from the girl's overcharged breast. "Change places quietly with me,

dear child. You will at least not see the lady of the party from this side."

But Joyce does not move. The heroic treatment which her own free will has prescribed shall be carried out, she resolves, without let or hindrance. They are here, on their road to Monte Carlo, with one object: to see Roger Tryan among the associates, the interests which occupy his life. Why seek to disguise the bitterness of such a draught? Is it not good for her to look her full, listen her keenest, and derive such quick sharp benefit from the tonic as she may?

Mrs. Pinto's lips continue to smile, she blows kisses from her finger tips, alternately to Mufti and to her husband, until the train gets well in motion. The moment they shoot forth from the Nice Station into darkness, she throws herself back, with an ominous jerk and rustle, folds her braceleted arms across her chest, and pouts. Roger Tryan, also, leans

back in his corner ; he gazes, with the expression of a man whose thoughts are elsewhere occupied, at the lamp in the centre of the carriage.

Things go on in this pseudo-tranquil fashion until they are about midway between the little stations of Villefranche and Beaulieu. Then, like the sudden upleaping flame of an olive-wood fire, does Nessie Pinto's temper burst forth. She gathers herself, morally and physically, together ; she bends over towards her companion, the hard, coarsely-cut lips aquiver, the mean brow lowering.

“That might have been an awkward meeting with the Dormers on the Promenade des Anglais, to-day, might it not? Brought me back, rather, to the old times at Langen Waldstein when Lady Joan Majendie——”

Roger Tryan interrupts her with a quick expostulatory whisper.

“Pray, be guarded, Mrs. Pinto! Remember

how a name travels. Remember that there are other persons in the carriage besides ourselves."

"Stuff and nonsense!" rejoins Nessie, in the sincerity of her ill-humour abandoning foreign affectation for familiar vernacular. "As if a trio of dowdy Italians could matter to me."

Filippo Filippi is whispering pretty things in liquid lingua Toscana about the blueness of the night and of the signorina's eyes—pretty things, to which Joyce, feverish and pre-absorbed, gives scanty heed.

"I am not in the least ashamed of anything I do or say," proceeds Nessie. "Although you, yes, *you*, Mr. Tryan," she passes a bit of embroidered cambric, with a furtive attempt at pathos, across her eyelashes, "are so mortally ashamed of me."

"Ashamed?" repeats Roger gently. "If you meant this in earnest, it would be equi-

valent to telling me that I am the most ungrateful fellow living. What should I be, at this moment, but for your kindness, your friendship?"

Very much better off than he is, socially, and financially, could the mists only clear from before Roger Tryan's eyes, and enable him to see the truth!

"Whose hand but yours was held bravely forth to me at a time when fortune was blindest?"

Ah, the pang in Joyce's miserable heart!

"What possible cause can I have for feeling ashamed of such old and tried friends as yourself, and—" the conclusion of the sentence does not flow with perfect readiness from Tryan's lips, "and Pinto?"

Nessie breaks forth with increasing bitterness: "I am not talking about Pinto at all. I am talking of myself only. Can you look me in the face, Mr. Tryan, and declare, on

your word of honour, that you felt no shame—you were not embarrassed—when we came across that Dormer girl and her mother this morning? I have had no opportunity of asking you the question sooner.”

Roger Tryan is silent.

“The ladies vouchsafed no recognition of their old friend,” pursues Nessie scoffingly. “But I don’t know whether the blame must be laid altogether at my door. What do you say?”

“I say,” replies Tryan, warming, “that there is one subject—just one in the world—upon which we shall do wisely to agree to differ. There is one name——”

She interrupts him with stinging emphasis :

“One name which Mr. Roger Tryan will not hear profaned by such an one as Nessie Pinto! And there is one pale-faced, cold-eyed girl whom Roger Tryan cannot meet, even now, two long years after she jilted him, with the

common, honest, self-respect of a man. How did I know them on the Promenade to-day? What instinct could have told me that those two atrociously dressed women were Mrs. and Miss Dormer, if your face had not betrayed you?"

Roger Tryan attempts a tone of banter, not too successfully.

"Ladies are quick at this sort of divination. The man of science can build up a megatherium from a single bone. A woman can evolve a character, a scene, a drama out of a bonnet-ribbon! Some detail in the 'atrocious dress' might have helped you to a theory, Mrs. Pinto, even if the Nice arrival list had not put you in possession of a fact."

"I am not at all in a humour for joking," cries Nessie, uncertain in her inmost soul as to whether Tryan laughs with, or at her. "And if I *had* read the names in the Arrival List, the subject concerned me too little to give it a

second thought." This is the exact style of Nessie Pinto's syntax. "Take it which way you like, you were embarrassed, Mr. Tryan, just as you always are embarrassed when any of your old set come across you in my society."

"Don't you think it is ungenerous—late, somewhat, in the day for you to make these reproaches?"

"I do not. I think the want of generosity is yours ; and I mean, as regards the Dormers, to know what ground I stand upon. The next time we meet those people in a public place, it may be Miss Joyce Dormer's whim to recognise you. Am I to walk discreetly on with Mufti, or what?"

Prompt, decisive, comes Roger Tryan's answer :

"I am afraid, Mrs. Pinto, the contingency is too remote to calculate upon."

"Afraid?"

"Certain, then, if you prefer the word.

You remember what Thackeray wrote about engaged young ladies in the 'Newcomes'?— They ought, like the pictures in the exhibition, to have little green labels pinned on their backs with Sold written on them. 'It would prevent further trouble and haggling,' said Ethel. 'And then at the end of the season the owners could carry us home.' The little green label, from what I hear, should be somewhere visible on Miss Dormer, and, next Easter, the owner," adds Roger Tryan with a certain change of voice, "is to carry her home from Italy."

"If Mr. Farintyre remains constant, as Miss Joyce Dormer's suitors have not always done," says Nessie bitterly. "All these speculations, remember, however interesting in themselves, are no answer to my question. If we meet Mrs. and Miss Dormer again in the public walks, if this chit of a girl sees fit to recognise you——"

But Nessie Pinto stops short: stops, with Tryan's face, white as marble, confronting her, with his grasp laid suddenly, heavily upon her wrist.

"Speak Miss Dormer's name with respect, if you must speak it at all!"

Though the strength of passion is in Roger's voice, it has sunk to a whisper. Only the morbidly strained condition of Joyce's senses enables her to catch his meaning clearly.

"I do not wish to quarrel with you, Mrs. Pinto. You should know that pretty well by this time. But, by——, if you mention Miss Dormer before me, you must see that the terms in which you speak of her are fitting!"

In this moment, Nessie Pinto, we may well believe, undergoes a worse sensation than that of common fear. Outwardly she does not flinch. A woman who has passed a dozen years at the side of Major Pinto must, by hard

training, have gained—not heroic courage perhaps, but a tough physical callousness, tolerably well calculated to take its place.

She even brings out a discordant, short stage laugh.

“Excuse my levity, Mr. Tryan! The tallest Adelphi tragedy never does more than set my teeth on edge. In the days that are no more I don’t know that you always wanted me to weigh my words in speaking of this very sacred subject?”

Tryan does not answer.

“And I insist—that I have a right to do—upon your replying to my question. If, as fate has thrown us all together, here in Nice, you should meet Miss Dormer when you are in my society——”

“If I should meet Miss Dormer, in any place or in any society, I should wait—have I not waited for more than two years?—hoping it might be *her whim* to recognise me. You

know, or ought to know, this pretty well already, Mrs. Pinto."

And having thus spoken, Roger Tryan loosens his hold curtly on Nessie's wrist. Then turning away, he leans his face towards the open window, through which the electric lights of Monte Carlo begin to whiten.

"Mr. Roger Tryan would wait, hoping it might be Joyce Dormer's whim to recognise him," repeats Nessie with sullen, slow precision. "And I . . . might walk on with Mufti! Exactly. It is always well that a delicate matter of this kind should be settled beforehand. I . . . might walk on with Mufti! We understand each other to a nicety."

And, after this, not another word is spoken in the railway carriage until the train stops at Monte Carlo.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BETWEEN THE LINES.

“FAITES le jeu, Messieurs. Le jeu est fait.
L’or va au rouleau. Tout va aux billets.
Tout va à la masse. Rien ne va plus.”

Half-blinded by excess of glare after the soft outside darkness, Joyce Dormer finds herself listening to the croupiers’ cries ; a sad-hearted unit among the crowd of human creatures who press around the roulette-tables in the first gambling salle of Monte Carlo.

What a crowd it is ! Representatives of every class, of every nation in Europe, abjuring each other, it may be, in the spirit, but jostled together in the flesh until they form a mosaic than which not even the congrega-

tion in St. Peter's at Easter can be more bizarre.

A douce old Dorsetshire dean, straight-coated, clerical-hatted, in close juxtaposition with Monsieur Zola's last types of Parisian lioness. Sallow-cheeked, sunken-eyed prodigals, *decavés* in the fullest sense of that untranslatable term, side by side with English girls, fresh in their teens. Hard-working thieves of business, who filch their substance straight out of other men's pockets, together with those of a more delicate fibre—thieves who pick up such orphan stakes as careless players leave unprotected on the table, "the brotherhood," according to Monte Carlo parlance, "of St. Vincent of Paul." Professional women gamblers, chiefly Teutonic, chiefly old, the last with faces that might serve as models to any new illustrator of Dante's *Inferno*: needy wretches, many of them, content to play their six or eight hours a day, if, at the close,

they be as many francs to the good. Young men, hopeful of mien, who intend to put on their one napoleon, and fly if they lose. A sprinkling of imperial Tartars; a well-known Irish countess; an Irish countess's husband; Jews from Genoa; hectic invalids from Mentone; Plymouth Brethren distributing polyglot tracts; a New-world authoress making notes for copy. Lastly, bediamonded, in paste, out of all reason, her bracelets clanking, her lips clothed in their falsest smiles, her black eyes alert, on the watch for the fall of cards, or of fortunes—Nessie Pinto.

Clearly distinct among a sisterhood where paste brilliants, false smiles, and clanking bracelets are the rule, Joyce Dormer sees this woman ere the first doorway is passed. Drawn by the queer magnetism which impels human beings towards the very thing which they would most shun, the girl approaches near enough, her hand rigidly clasped upon her mother's arm,

to catch the tones of Nessie's ringing voice and harsh strident laugh.

The evening is progressing, for Mrs. and Miss Dormer with their poet have lingered in the delicious freshness of the gardens. But Nessie Pinto stands, as yet, an idle spectator, beside one of the roulette-tables. Roger Tryan, in the second salle, is trying his fortune at trente-et-quarante ; and Nessie, for her attendant, has Sir Dyse Tottenham, that irresistible red-tape knight of sixty, whose buttoned Bond Street coat, Prince Regent wig, purple face, and short portly figure, are just as well known within the precincts of Monte Carlo as the croupiers or the chandeliers.

A wily player at life's game, as on this mimic battlefield of green baize, is Sir Dyse, an Achilles vulnerable, financially, at one point only, as Nessie Pinto right well knows—the point of vanity.

“Terrible things are whispered about your

goings-on last night," she tells him reproachfully. "After I left, you banked, in spite of all my warnings, with little Mrs. Scrope"—little Mrs. Scrope is the prettiest woman between Marseilles and Florence—"and dropped your money, royally. Now if you would only throw in for another coup, put yourself, for once, under my safe wing, I should take so much better care of you than Mrs. Scrope!"

Nessie glances, as she pleads, into the withered face at her side; and a pleading glance of Nessie's handsome eyes is, when she chooses, something worth encountering. But Sir Dyse melts not: he remarks with guarded gallantry, that he would shrink from implicating any one so charming and so ingenuous as Mrs. Pinto, in his ill luck.

"If every one felt as I do, the term 'ill luck' would go out of use," cries Nessie Pinto briskly. "Luck, however bad, must sooner or later change, and sensitively organised natures


have an instinct for divining *when*. In that lies all the secret. I feel, though I could not reason about it, that I shall get on a run to-night."

"A pity, if you are in the vein, that Major Pinto is not here to reap the benefit of the inspiration."

And Sir Dyse is sensible of a fluttering sensation, not so much in his heart, as in the left breast-pocket where he carries his purse.

"Oh, Pinto was dining out." Have I not hinted that poetic licence at all times comes easier than prose to Major Pinto's wife? "We are in such an immense circle at Nice—it is only by dividing we can get through our engagements at all. Yes, Pinto was dining out; and Roger Tryan"—how his name, spoken as Nessie Pinto speaks it, jars on Joyce's ear!—"Roger Tryan was kind enough to escort me here."

Sir Dyse makes her an old-fashioned little bow.



"Mr. Roger Tryan is hugely to be congratulated on his good fortune!"

"I wish I could agree with you," says Nessie, shaking her head. "Pinto and I consider Mr. Roger Tryan quite the most persistent loser we know. The fact is, you see, poor fellow, he has no beliefs. I am as broad as most people, still, one must have some dogmatic weaknesses."

"Even at the gambling-tables of Monte Carlo?" chuckles Sir Dyse Tottenham.

"More here than elsewhere. You see this mysterious amulet I wear in my bracelet? It is a morsel of De Morigny's rope—the wretched little Frenchman," says Nessie, with the contempt minds of a certain order feel towards failure, "who hanged himself the other day. (And I know it to be authentic! A good many forgeries are current, but Pinto *was on the spot at once.*) Well, whenever I wear my bracelet I am certain to win at roulette—

though, of course, I would not tempt fate by wearing it too often."

"Your principles, madam, are above praise."

"At superstition I draw the line. No Aberglaube; no fetishism for me." Nessie inclines much towards airing words she does not rightly understand. "I call it blind credulity, do not you, to back one number because you got it in exchange for your umbrella, or another because it was on the fiacre that took you to the Nice Station?"

"I think I should call it a dogmatic weakness, Mrs. Pinto."

"But I am above all that. My faiths are few but firm. This bracelet, I *know*, brings me luck at roulette, and so do certain among the croupiers at trente-et-quarante."

Old Sir Dyse looks amused, as Nessie intends that he should feel.

"And what," he asks, "is the difference between faith and Aberglaube?"

“Faith with me is experience,” replies Mrs. Pinto gravely. “Nothing in creation would persuade me to stake at trente-et-quarante when that Russian fellow, Kriloff, deals. I consider little Paul Joseph the luckiest croupier of the Administration. You heard about the wonderful run last Saturday night? Rouge had made thirty-two, not a bad point, as you know; twenty-four had been dealt for noir, and then *seven* aces were laid down in succession, making noir the game with thirty-one. Well, I was backing noir, Sir Dyse,” says Nessie, her eyes aflame with interest, “and little Paul Joseph, my good genius, was dealing. Imagine the feelings of the backers of rouge!”

At the conclusion of her narrative, Nessie moves nearer the roulette-table, whither the gallantry of the ancient red-tape knight leaves him no choice but to follow.

“Another of my beliefs is that you should invariably begin play with roulette,” she

whispers amidst the Adonis-like tendrils of his wig. "It rouses the faculties, clears the cobwebs from one's brain before settling to the serious work of trente-et-quarante. Shall we try our fortunes together, Sir Dyse?—start off with a humble joint napoleon, and resolve, as Pinto says, not to let our passions run away with us?"

And Nessie's talisman, the shred of suicide's hemp, for a time would seem to work well.

The joint napoleon is staked; they win, stake, win again. A heap of gold begins to mount, well guarded by the lady's jewelled left hand. A cautious fire lights up her bistred eyes; the hard lines around her lips grow harder. Iron will, cool nerve, indomitable patience—qualities that under other auspices might have made a great and a true woman—are to be deciphered in this ugly moment on Nessie Pinto's countenance.

"Trente-cinq; noir impair et manque,"

cries the monotonous croupier's voice. "Trente-cinq ; noir impair et passe. Trente-quatre ; rouge pair et passe."

Mrs. Dormer clings closer to Filippo Filippi's arm.

"The whole scene is sickeningly painful. Look straight at a face before us, Joyce, alas ! at a face we know," for they have now approached the trente-et-quarante table where Roger Tryan, unconscious whose eyes are watching him, stakes his napoleons. "What mean, what apathetic despair one sees written there ! It is no place for you, my darling."

"Mamma," answers the girl earnestly, "every place is a place for an artist, that which in the world I most aspire to be. If there had been a Monte Carlo in Schumann's days, what a dark companion picture to his 'Butterflies' might have been left to the world ! Schumann would have let you hear the rippling of the wind among roses and orange-boughs outside,

the hoarse 'Rien ne va plus' of the croupiers, the whispers of the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen—yes, and the groan of the wretch who has lost his last napoleon and carries his pistol in his breast-pocket! Do you think me so light, so cold," pursues Joyce, with a flushing cheek, "that I am unkindled by the pain, the tragedy, to which all this gaslight and tinsel and gilding form the drop-scene?"

"I think," says Mrs. Dormer cleverly, yet with the practical ignorance of human nature which characterises so many of these half-clever, half-worldly women—"I think that if a sensitive, well-nurtured English girl wished to be cured of an idle love fancy, she would look critically at her hero's face—I mean at the face of the man who was her hero once—when it is deformed by the meanest of all passions—gambling."

"And suppose that, in her eyes, it were not deformed?" exclaims Joyce. "Suppose

she could read between the lines, could recognise, not apathy, not despair, but the weary discontent of a man too good for his surroundings?"

"I spoke of a girl possessing common-sense; a girl determined to see that which she very well knows must exist."

Joyce Dormer turns sadly away.

Alas! she has looked only too critically at the face of him who was her hero once, and in the look has gone back to the whole sweet, passionate romance of her life! Her first meeting with Roger at the opera when "Carmen, mia Carmen adorata" rang through her heart; the London balls at which night after night she used, through curiously-persistent mischance, to lose her programme, and was reduced to telling Mr. Tryan "he might decide as he liked about her dances;" the hour when, amidst slanting yellow sunshine and call of birds and sway of branches, their talk first

wandered from half-jesting sentiment into the borderland of passion. . . . She has gone back to it all, and knows that never, no, not even in the morning of their too brief courtship, did she love Roger Tryan more utterly than at this moment.

END OF VOL. I.



